

The Cranston Occurrence

by Philip Buckland



A Frank Hurley mystery

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CHAPTER I

I was here inside my office and sitting behind my desk and reading a book to pass the time while I was waiting for Susan Ballis, free lance photojournalist, to show up and keep her appointment with me.

But I wasn't going to have to wait for her anymore. She showed up.

I recognized her from her photograph in the check I had run on her after she had called me and after we had made our appointment. I stood up to greet her.

She was tall, plump, had long, thick wheat blonde hair, green eyes, a round face, a creamy tan complexion, and she was wearing a black waistlength coat and a matching skirt and a white blouse and flesh tone stockings and shiny black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shiny black shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

"Hello," I said to her, smiling. "Susan Ballis?"

"Yes. I'm Susan Ballis," she said. She smiled, too. "Frank Hurley?"

"Yes. I'm Frank Hurley."

Then Susan walked over to me, and we shook hands. Her grip was firm but pleasant.

"Would you like something to drink?" I asked her.

"No," she said. "I'm fine."

"Would you like to sit down."

"Thank you,"

"You're welcome,"

Then Susan sat down, and so did I.

"Now," I said. "What can I do for you, Ms Ballis?"

"Lieutenant Pritchard of the Detective Unit recommended you to me," Susan said to me. "He told me that you look into anything secret or illegal."

"That's right. I do,"

"Well, I told the police about this, but Lieutenant Pritchard, one of the policemen I talked to about this, told me that there's nothing they can do about it. They can't even look into it. They can't even open a file on it. It looks like no crime's being committed, or has been committed, or will be committed. Then he told me to talk to *you* about this. Maybe *you* can find out if a crime *is* being committed or will be committed or has been committed. I think that someone is impersonating a friend of mine."

"Oh?"

"Yes,"

"What your friend's name?"

"Belinda Cranston. She works in the research department of Consolidate Industries."

I wrote this down on the pad on my desk. Then I spoke to Susan again: "What makes you think that someone *is* impersonating Belinda?"

"Something I heard about, and something I saw, and something I heard. Some friends of mine and of Belinda's told me that they were in a bar one night and saw Belinda dancing on a table and wearing make up. Then, later on, I heard that she went out with guys after she was at that bar and dancing on that table. She's never done this before, and she has never worn make up. She used to be a Casper Milquetoast. And now she's a swinger. Then one day I went over to her place to borrow some money from her, and then she went into another room to get the money for me, and while I was in the

living room waiting for her to come back with the money, I noticed that she had the TV on inside her room. Her room is across the hall from the living room. And then I saw a box of candy on her bed. And most of the chocolates in the box had been eaten. So it looked like Belinda had eaten most of the chocolates. But Belinda had never eaten chocolate in her life. She doesn't like chocolate. She knows that chocolate is the major cause for causing pimples. Then another day I went back to her place to pay her back the money I borrowed from her, but before I knocked on the door of her place, I heard someone inside the house say: "They bought the act. They think that Belinda Cranston is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger."

"Was the voice of this someone inside Belinda's house male or female?"

"Male."

"Did you recognize his voice?"

"No. I never heard it before. After I heard this someone and Belinda talking, I waited a few seconds, then knocked on the door the person inside the place and Belinda think I overheard what they were talking about. Then Belinda came to the door, and then I told her I had the money to pay her back with, and then I gave her the money, and then she told me she couldn't talk to me right now. She was talking to someone on the phone. Then I left."

"I see. Have you got any other evidence that makes you think that someone is impersonating Belinda?"

"No, I don't,"

"I see. Well, I'm afraid I feel the same way about this that the police do: there's nothing to look into. There isn't enough evidence to go on. As for your hearing about Belinda being at that bar and dancing on the table and wearing make up and later on going out with guys, the real Belinda could say that she changed for the better. She got tired of being a Casper Milquetoast, and so she changed. Decided to be a swinger. There's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with changing. There would be the possibility that the real Belinda would change for the better. Or maybe the phony Belinda, this person who's impersonating Belinda, could say that the real Belinda had changed for the better. She could say that the real Belinda got tired of being a Casper Milquetoast, and so she decided to be a swinger and did all of these things you told me about. But if the phony Belinda is playing the part of the real Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then she must be doing this for some important reason. And I find that interesting. As for the chocolate, maybe the real Belinda took a liking to the chocolate. Although she may still know that chocolate is the major cause of causing pimples. There is that possibility. Or maybe the phony Belinda likes chocolates. There is that possibility, but she knows that the real Belinda doesn't like chocolate because it causes her skin to break out, but she could say that the real Belinda took a liking to chocolate if anyone sees her eating chocolate. And as for your hearing what Belinda said to the other person who was inside Belinda's place when you went back to her place to pay her back the money you borrowed from her, maybe the real Belinda said that to the person who was inside her place."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Maybe the real Belinda has some reason for a being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Although I find that conversation you overheard her and that other person had suspicious. Or maybe the phony Belinda had that conversation with that person when that person was inside the real Belinda's place."

"Well, then, if the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, is pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then what reason would the real Belinda or the phony Belinda have for pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger?"

"I don't know. But whatever the reason is, it's secret. Known only to the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the person the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was talking to inside Belinda's place when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back Belinda the money you borrowed from her and you overheard that conversation they had. And there might be some other people who know about this secret, too, people who are in on this operation with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was talking to inside Belinda's house when you went over to her place to pay back the money you borrowed from her and you overheard that conversation they had. And all of these people won't want anyone else to know what they're doing. So I'll look into this."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Hurley."

"You're welcome, Ms Ballis. Maybe there is nothing to look into, or maybe there's something to look into, but someone's making it look like there's nothing to look into. It has to be one of the two. But we'll find out. But understand this: just because they working on something secret doesn't mean it's illegal. Maybe it is, or maybe it's legal. But if I discover that they're doing something legal in a secret fashion, I'll have to leave them alone and walk away from what they're doing and forget it. It maybe important what they're doing, and I can't interfere in it. But, of course, if they're doing something illegal, they won't want anyone to know that they're doing something illegal. And if I discover they *are* doing something illegal, I'm going to have to call the police and tell them what they're doing with or without your knowledge or permission."

"I understand,"

"Good. Now. My fee is twenty five dollars an hour."

Susan nodded. "I can pay it, and I will," she said.

"Good. Now. As for how we look into this thing about the real Belinda or the phony Belinda pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. If I go to either one of them and tell them I'm a private investigator and show either one of them my private investigator's license and tell them I'm looking into this thing about either one of them pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, either one of them will say that she is Belinda. And she'll have the papers to prove it. And because of this, we're going to have to go undercover on this. We'll say that you and I are old friends and that you told me about Belinda and I got interested in her and I decided to go out with her. After that, you tell her that you told me about her and I got interested in her and I decided to go out with her, and after you do this, you tell me you did it, and then I make a date her and go out with her, and then we see what happens after that and take it from there. But if you're going to tell her my real name, don't tell her I'm a private investigator. Instead, tell her I'm in between jobs and I'm taking the time to think things out."

"All right,"

"I won't have my private investigator's license with me while I'm with her."

"All right,"

"Also, and to play it by ear, and during the investigation, the both of us stay away from my office. Neither one of us goes to or from my office during the investigation. We don't want either Belinda to see either one of us or both of us going into or out of my

office for some reason if she drives down the street and passes by my office for some reason. Even though I don't have a sign on the door or wall of my office saying I am a private investigator. Only the number of the address of my office is on the wall of my office."

"Yes, I noticed that when I came in. And I'll stay away from your office while we look into what either Belinda's doing."

"Good. So we'll see each other at my place or your place or where you work at if one of us needs to talk to the other about something. I already know where you work and live, and I also know your home phone number and your work phone number. I did say I ran a check on you." Then I wrote *my* home phone number down on the pad on my desk. Susan already knew my office phone number since she had called me yesterday here at my office and we had made our appointment for the interview today here at my office. Then I tore off of the pad the paper I had written my phone number on and gave it to Susan. Then she read what was on the paper, and I told her that what I had just written on the paper was my home phone number. "If you need to get a hold of me about something, call me at home and not here at my office. Or, if I need to get a hold of *you* about something, I'll call *you* at home or at work."

"All right,"

"What I can and will need to do before you call me and tell me you told the real Belinda or the phony Belinda that I'm interested in her and I want to go out with her and we see what happens after that is get into Belinda's house and search it and bug it and tap her phone and listen in on her house and phone."

"Of course."

"I'll let you know when I've done that, then you can call me and tell me you told the real Belinda or the phony Belinda that you told me about the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and I got interested in her and that I want to go out with her and we see what happens after that."

"All right,"

"I'll also tail the real Belinda or the phony Belinda whenever I'm not with her."

"All right."

"Now. I want you to tell me everything you know about Belinda."

Susan did.

CHAPTER II

It was getting dark when Susan finished telling me everything she knew about Belinda. Now she left my office so she could go out into the parking lot of my office and get into her car and go home.

When she reached her white Bel Air, she got into it and started it up and drove out of the parking lot and went home.

Me? I was still here inside my office. Still sitting behind my desk. I looked at my watch. Three minutes past five. I continued reading the book I had been reading before Susan had showed up and had kept our appointment. I was going to stay here at my office, and then *I* was going to go home, too. After Susan had told me everything she knew about Belinda, I had suggested to her that we leave my office separately to keep the real Belinda or the phony Belinda from seeing us leave my office together--if the real Belinda or the phony Belinda drives down Cornwall Avenue where my office was and passes by my office for some reason. Even though there was no sign on the door or wall of my office that said I was a private investigator. Only the number of the address of my office was on the wall of my office.

After I finished reading a few more pages of the book, I put the bookmark in the book, and then I put the book into the top side drawer of my desk and locked the drawer, and then I turned on my answering machine, and then I left my office and locked the door, leaving on the light inside my office, and then I went out into the parking lot and got into my Dodge and started it up and drove out of the parking lot so I could go home.

As I drove home, I thought about this occurrence that Susan had told me about. One of the things I'll have to do is find out why the real Belinda or the phony Belinda is pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. There had to be a reason for that. And if either one of them were pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then her job must be to make people believe that Belinda Cranston is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And if either one's job is to make people believe that Belinda Cranston is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then why is either one of them supposed to make people believe that Belinda Cranston is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger? I found this interesting.

And then there were two more questions; one: if someone *were* impersonating Belinda, then where was the real Belinda? And two: if someone *were* impersonating Belinda, was the real Belinda still alive, or was she dead right now?

I decided to call this case the Cranston occurrence. Because what it was that was occurring had to do with Belinda Cranston, although it didn't look like what it was that was occurring was a crime, and it didn't look like a crime had been committed, and it didn't look like a crime will be committed.

It just looked like a girl who had changed for the better. And that was all.

I was here at home now. Home was here on Liberty Street. When I had gotten home, I had put my private investigator's license into my safe, which was hidden here at my place. Although I hadn't put my gun in the safe. I might need that. You never know. Now I was here inside my living room and sitting in my favorite recliner chair and watching TV and sipping beer and thinking about something else that had to do with the Cranston occurrence.

The one thing about this person's impersonating Belinda that would work against me and for her was that since she was playing the part of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, she could say that she had changed in some other areas as

well as she had changed for the better and act out these changes as well as play the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And there wouldn't be anything suspicious about that.

In other words, the person who was impersonating Belinda could make Belinda look, sound, and act like Belinda had become an entirely different person.

I looked at the small digital alarm clock on top of my TV. It told me it was eight minutes to six.

I could search and bug Belinda's place and tap her phone and listen in on her home and phone tonight. I don't know about finding and tailing her herself tonight. I don't think I was going to have the time to search and bug her place and tap her phone and listen in on her home and phone *and* find and follow her tonight. So I decided to search and bug her place and tap her phone and listen in on her place and her phone tonight, *and* find and follow her later. But before I was going to go over to Belinda's place and search it and bug it and tap her phone and listen in on her place and her phone, I was going to have to get something to eat. I was getting hungry. So I might as well eat while I had the chance to eat.

That was the way it was in the private investigation business: whenever you have the chance to do something, you take it. Because you don't know when you'll get the chance to do it again. I finished my drink, and then I turned the TV off, and then I went into my bedroom and got undressed, and then I went into my bathroom and shaved and showered, and then I went back into *my* room and got dressed.

I was driving over to the Five Columns now. I was in the mood to eat out tonight. Not only that, there wasn't anything wrong with going out until I meet the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and take it from there. Since I didn't know when I was going to meet the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and take it from there. That could happen at anytime.

The Five Columns was a wonderful Greek and Italian restaurant here on Samish Way.

I arrived here the Five Columns and parked my car in front of the restaurant, and then I went into the restaurant. Then I saw Craig. He had come out of the men's room and now he was walking back to his table. He was tall, lean, pale, had the face of a lizard, and he was wearing a gray suit and a white shirt, top button unbuttoned, a black tie, loosened, and black leather shoes.

Craig's last name was Pritchard, and he was a lieutenant in the Detective Unit of the police department here in Bellingham, Washington, and he had been the one Susan had talked to about the Cranston occurrence, and he had also been the one who had suggested to Susan that she talk to *me* about the Cranston occurrence.

I yelled out to Craig, and then he saw me, and then I walked over to him.

"Ay, Frank," Craig said to me, smiling. "How are you doin'?"

"Fine," I said. I smiled, too "You?"

"Fine, fine,"

We were sitting at Craig's table now. Craig had asked me to join him, and I said I would. Now we were looking at menus. After we decided what to have, a waiter came and took our orders and the menus and disappeared.

"Where's Pat?" I then asked Craig. Pat was Craig's wife. "Isn't she with you?"

"No," Craig answered. She's out of town and visiting her sister. She'll be gone for about a week."

"Oh," Then I told Craig that Susan had come to me and had told me about the Cranston occurrence, and then I told him I was going to look into it.

"Well, if you find anything solid, you'll let me know, won't ya?" Craig asked me after I had finished.

"I will," I promised. Then I told Craig I was calling the case the Cranston occurrence, and why I was calling it the Cranston occurrence.

"That's a pretty interesting story that Susan Ballis told me." Craig said after I had finished.

"Yes, it is,"

Craig and I were sipping Margaritas we had ordered and talking about other things and not about the Cranston occurrence now.

Craig and I were eating our dinners now. Craig had chicken Slovaki for dinner, and washed it down with his Margarita, and I had spaghetti and meatballs for dinner, and washed it down with *my* Margarita, and for dessert Craig had lemon mousse, and washed it down with his Margarita, and for dessert I had butterscotch mousse and washed it down with *my* Margarita.

We felt better after we had eaten.

I was still here at the Five Columns. Craig had left the Five Columns and had gone home. He told me that Burn Notice was on tonight and he didn't want to miss it. He liked that show. Me? I was sipping coffee right now. I needed to stay awake for what I was going to do tonight.

Belinda's place was on Texas Street. It was a nice gray one storey house with an orange roof and a matching garage.

I pulled up to the curb on the other side of Belinda's place and parked my car against the curb. I had finished my coffee and had paid the check and had left the Five Columns so I could come over here to Belinda's place and do what I was going to do tonight. Now I looked at Belinda's place. There was only one light on inside her place. Which meant that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was at home, or either one of them had gone out and had left one of the lights on inside the house. I wasn't going to like breaking into her house to do what I had to do since the light was on inside her place, but I was going to have to do it. Because it had to be done. But before I did it, I looked around to see if anyone were going to see me sneak into Belinda's house. No one did. Then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I crossed the street and went into the back of Belinda's place and took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I took my lock pick set out of my pocket, and then I picked the lock of the side door of Belinda's place and went into her place and closed and locked the door as quickly and silently as I could. Then I put my lock pick set back into my pocket and took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shined the light into the room I was standing in now.

The room I was standing in now was the kitchen. It was big and white and wide and spacious and square, with the refridgerator and the stove and the microwave oven and the sink and the countertop and the cupboards and the washer and the dryer lining all of the walls of the kitchen and standing on a white linoleum floor. Also inside the kitchen and standing on the linoleum floor were a caramel colored wooden table with matching chairs surrounding the table.

I searched the kitchen, but it didn't tell me anything. Then I left the kitchen and walked through the house and shined the light of my penlight out in front of me.

The room I was in now was the living room now. It was just as spacious as the kitchen. It, too, was white, and it had a brown carpet covering the floor, and lining all of the walls of the room were a blonde wooden cabinet with TV and VCR and DVD player and radio on the cabinet, and inside the shelves of the cabinet were videocassettes and DVD's, and next to the cabinet was a table with Belinda's phone and answering machine on it, and next to the table the phone and answering machine were on was a green armchair, and on the other side of the room was a sugar brown couch with a shiny black coffee table in front of the couch. I looked at Belinda's answering machine. The light on the answering machine was flashing on and off several times. Which meant that a lot of people had been trying to get a hold of her. I wouldn't be surprised if it were a lot of guys who were trying to get a hold of her so they could ask her for a date because of the time Susan had told me that she had heard about a lot of guys who had been going out with Belinda ever since Belinda had been seen in that bar and had danced on that table that night. Wild. Then I tapped Belinda's phone and put a bug underneath the couch.

I searched the living room, but I didn't find anything here.

I was leaving the living room now. It was time now for me to continue searching the house. I didn't stop and play back the messages on Belinda's answering machine, though. No sense doing that. After I listen to them, the light on her answering machine would stop flashing, and then, when the real Belinda or the phony Belinda comes home, and checks the answering machine, then notices the light on the machine not blinking, she'll know that someone had been here inside her place and had listened to her messages and may have done something here inside her place. And she may call the police because of this. And I couldn't have that. Because of this, I was going to have to improvise on listening to her messages on her answering machine by listening in on her phone and her place since I had bugged her phone and her place.

I was here inside Belinda's room and searching it now. It was big and white and white and spacious with a shiny blonde wooden floor, and against one of the walls of the room was the bed with an olive green spread on the bed and a matching case on the pillow, and on either side of the bed were maple bedside tables, and opposite the bed were the closet and a maple dresser.

I found several boxes of chocolates inside one of the bedside tables. One of the boxes was opened, and several of the chocolates inside that box had been eaten. I continued looking through Belinda's room, but I didn't find anything.

I searched the rest of the house and the garage, but I didn't find anything inside them. Now there was Belinda's car, a shiny light green '65 Falcon. It was here inside the garage. And the car's being here in the garage told me that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda must be on a date right now. That and the light being on inside Belinda's house. Someone must have come over here to Belinda's place and had picked up the real Belinda or the phony Belinda for their date, and then the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the guy who had come for her went out. And the Falcon also told me that Belinda was still driving the Falcon, and the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was going to continue driving the Falcon until she gets a better car. Something that a swinger would drive. The real Belinda owned and drove a Falcon before she had become a swinger. Susan told me that Belinda owned and drove a Falcon.

I searched the Falcon, but it didn't tell me anything.

I was walking away from Belinda's place now. I had finished searching it. Now I crossed the street and unlocked my car and got into it, and then I took the radio to the bug I had put inside Belinda's house, and the radio to the tap I had put inside Belinda's

phone, and my pocket size tape recorder, out of my pockets and put them on the front seat of my car and turned on the radio to the bug and turned on the radio to the tap. The only time I was going to turn the tape recorder on was when I'd hear something going on inside Belinda's place and on her phone so I can record what I hear going on inside Belinda's place and on her phone. It was time now for me to listen in on Belinda's phone and house and record what I hear going on inside her place and on her phone if or when necessary. I started up my car, and then I pulled away from the curb and drove down the street.

I was driving back to my place now. I listened in on Belinda's place and her phone. Although there was nothing going on inside her place right now, and there weren't any conversations on her phone right now, either.

I also thought about what I had found Belinda's place. Which was nothing. The search told me that either the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was living there at Belinda's place. There was nothing at Belinda's place to indicate that the person who was impersonating Belinda was living there and that the real Belinda was somewhere else right now--if the switch had been made. It looked like the real Belinda lived there. However, that made sense. The person impersonating Belinda wouldn't have anything at Belinda's place that would tell anyone that the person impersonating Belinda was living there at Belinda's place and that the real Belinda was somewhere else--if the switch had been made. Like something that belonged to the person impersonating Belinda. If she did, she'd arouse suspicion. Or worse, she'd expose herself. And then she'd be arrested or escape. And if she'd be arrested, she'd clam up and have an attorney present and not tell us where the real Belinda was so that we can't find her, and we wouldn't be able to find out why the impostor was impersonating Belinda, either. Or, if she'd escape, she'd make sure that we wouldn't find her so she could keep us from finding the real Belinda *and* we wouldn't be able to find out why she was impersonating Belinda.

I was here at home now. Inside my living room and sitting in my favorite recliner chair and watching TV and sipping beer and listening in on Belinda's place and her phone and ready to record anything I hear going on inside Belinda's place or on her phone. The radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, were here on my coffee table.

Two hours later, I was getting sleepy. So I turned the TV off and collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the bug inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and then I went into *my* room and turned on the light. Then I put both radios and the tape recorder on one of my bedside tables, and then I withdrew my Smith and Wesson .38 Special from my shoulder holster and put it underneath my pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned the light off and got into bed and went to sleep. Without setting the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow. Since "I was between jobs and taking the time to think things out."

I stirred, then came awake when I heard something. Then I listened. It sounded like it was coming from inside Belinda's place. I turned on the lamp, which was on one of the bedside tables, and then I looked at the alarm clock that was on the same table the lamp was on to see what time it was now. One thirty-five. Then I turned the tape recorder on and recorded what time it was now and continued listening to and recorded what was going on inside Belinda's place. I heard a door being opened, and then I heard the door being closed. Then I heard footsteps coming into the living room. It sounded like there was only one set of footsteps. And they sounded like they were short and light.

Then I heard the footsteps stop. And then I heard the tape on the answering machine being rewound. And then I heard the person playing back the tape. The answering machine was playing back messages from guys who said they'd like to go out with her.

The person listening to the messages laughed. And the laugh was female. Which meant that the person who was listening to these messages was Belinda's impostor, and she was glad to get all these messages. Because she was glad to hear that her playing the part of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, was working, *or*, the person who was listening to these messages was the real Belinda, because *she* was glad to get all these messages. Because *she* was glad to hear that *her* playing the part of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, was working.

Then the answering machine shut itself off. No doubt there were no more messages on the machine. Then I heard the footsteps leaving the living room. No doubt the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was going to go to bed, and then tomorrow, the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, was going to call these guys who had left their messages on Belinda's answering machine and make dates with them. I don't think she was going to call them up and make dates with them right now, though. It was too early in the morning to do that. And there was no reason for me to continue my investigation of the Cranston occurrence right now, either. I could resume the investigation at a better time tomorrow. So I turned the tape recorder off, and then I turned the lamp off, and then I went back to sleep.

CHAPTER III

The next morning I was here inside the living room and sitting in my recliner chair and sipping my fourth cup of coffee and watching TV. I was able to think now. And did. I thought about the reaction that the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, had to the recordings of the guys asking her for dates was when she had listened to them on her answering machine.

She had laughed when she had heard them. Which meant that either the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, had to keep putting on the act. To continue playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And that made sense. If she'd stop playing the role for some reason, then resumed playing the role later, she might trip herself up later on. And that could work against her. Which she couldn't have. So she had to play Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, all the way down the line. Or maybe she knew that Belinda's house was bugged and her phone was tapped. There would be that possibility. Or maybe she didn't want anyone to overhear what she was saying or doing inside Belinda's house whenever they'd go over there for some reason that had to do with her playing the part of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. There was that possibility, too.

In other words, for anyone of these reasons, or two them, or all three of them, she had to keep it up.

After I finished my fourth cup of coffee, I went into the kitchen and made myself some breakfast.

I was here inside the living room and watching TV and sipping more coffee and eating my breakfast now. Which consisted of bacon, scrambled eggs, and hash browns.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee and continued watching TV.

I was here inside my den now. Sipping more coffee and sitting behind my desk and listening to the recordings of the guys who had left those messages on Belinda's answering machine again, and writing down their names and phone numbers on the pad on my desk so I could find out who these guys were and run checks on them. I think it was going to be a waste of time running checks on them, though. It looked like they had nothing to do with what the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was doing. But that was the way it was in the investigation business: you had to check everything. I also listened in on Belinda's house and phone. The radio to the bug inside Belinda's house, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, were here on my desk. I still had to find out what was going on while the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was at her place. This morning, the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, had been moving around inside Belinda's place, and she was still moving around inside Belinda's place. No doubt one of them was getting ready to go to work. She hadn't made or taken any phone calls, though. She hadn't even called the guys who had left those messages on Belinda's answering machine. But that didn't mean that one of them wasn't going to call those guys and make dates with them. She might call them and make dates with them later. When she'd have the time to call them and make dates with them.

After I had finished writing down the names and phone numbers of those guys who had left their messages on Belinda's answering machine, I shut the tape recorder off and turned on the computer so I could run the checks on those guys.

All of them lived here in Bellingham, and some of them were working, and the rest of them weren't working. But there was nothing suspicious about any of these guys. Just

guys who had gone out with Belinda and wanted to go out with her again, and more guys who had heard about Belinda and wanted to go out with her. No reason to investigate these guys. It did look like they had nothing to do with what the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was doing. But, of course, if they did have something to do with what the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, was doing, they'll show up later and say or do something to indicate they have something to do with what the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was doing.

I turned my computer off after I had finished running those checks on those guys, and then I called my office and checked my answering machine to find out if I got any messages or not. I needed to do that. Even though I was going to have to stay away from my office while I look into the Cranston occurrence.

There were no messages on my answering machine, so I hung up, and then I continued sipping some more of my new cup of coffee and continued listening in on Belinda's home and phone. This time it sounded like the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was leaving Belinda's place. No doubt one of them was going to go to work. Belinda did work today.

I took the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and the cup of coffee, and went into the living room and put them on the coffee table, and then I turned the TV on and sat down in my recliner chair and watched TV and continue sipping my coffee and continued listening in on Belinda's home and phone. This time I wanted to continue listening in on Belinda's home and phone while I relax. I was done inside the den. So now I had the time to relax. And should relax while I work.

Another reason why I wanted to watch TV while I listen in on Belinda's home and phone was because I wanted to finish my coffee. I still wasn't completely awake. And I wanted to get completely awake. And I had the time to do it.

My phone was in my den. It rang. Then my answering machine answered the phone. "This is Frank Hurley," my answering machine announcement said. "Leave your name, phone number, and message at the beep." Then came the beep. Then the person calling me spoke: "Mr. Hurley, this is Susan Ballis. I just called Belinda and told her about you and that you'd like to meet her and go out with her. And she said you can call her and make a date with her anytime." Then Susan hung up. After that, the answering machine shut itself off, ready to record a new message.

I collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and took them with me as I went into the den to listen to who had left his or her message on my answering machine so I could continue listening in on Belinda's home and phone and be prepared to record whatever I hear inside Belinda's home and on her phone.

When I got here inside my den, I put the radio to the bug inside Belinda's house, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, on my desk, and then I sat down behind my desk and played back the message on my answering machine and listened to the message that Susan had just left me. After I listened to it, the answering machine shut itself off, and then I looked at the small electric alarm clock on my desk. It told me I had time to call Belinda at work and make my date with her. And she had to be at work right now. So I picked up the receiver of my phone and called Consolidated Industries.

When I got a hold of Consolidated Industries, I asked for Research. And then the operator put me in touch with Research.

"Research," a young female voice said when she came on.

"Belinda Cranston, please,"

"This is,"

"Ms Cranston, this is Frank Hurley. I'm a friend of Susan Ballis, and she told me about you . . ."

"Oh, yes," Belinda interrupted. "And Susan has told *me* about *you*. And she also told me you'd like to go out with me."

"Yes, I would,"

"Well, I'd like that very much,"

"Great,"

Then Belinda and I made a date. Then we hung up. Then I called Susan and told her I had gotten her message about her telling Belinda that I wanted to meet her and go out with her and that I had called Belinda at work and had made a date with her.

"Good," Susan said after I had finished.

"Yeah. Now we're in," Then I told Susan what Belinda and I were going to do on our date and when our date was. After that, I told Susan what I had done last night at Belinda's place and what I had discovered in my investigation of Belinda's place last night.

"I see," Susan said after I had finished.

Then I told Susan what I had heard the real Belinda or the phony Belinda do at Belinda's place from *my* place this morning, and what I had done later this morning all the way up to the time I had gotten Susan's message on my answering machine saying she had told Belinda I'd like to meet Belinda and go out with her and that I had called Belinda at work and had made our date and why I had done it. After that, we hung up.

Susan had sounded disappointed when I had told her what I had done last night and what I had done early this morning and what I had done later this morning and when I had done all of these things. It wasn't much fun telling her that I had nothing to report right now. But I did have to tell her what I had done and why I had done it.

I looked at my clock on my desk again. It told me it was thirteen minutes after ten.

The only other thing about my assignment I could do until I keep my date with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was rest up for my date with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda. And I was going to need to do that.

My date with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was for tonight. But I didn't have to rest up for my date with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda right away. So one of the things I could do right now was continue doing what I had been doing before the phone had rung and the answering machine had recorded the message and I had listened to the message and had called the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and had made our date and had called Susan and had told her I had talked to the real Belinda or the phony Belinda about going out and had called Susan and what I had told Susan about what I had done last night and early this morning and all the way up to the time the answering machine had answered the phone and what I had done after that. I collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and the cup of coffee, and then took them with me as I left the den and went back into the living room and put the two radios and the tape recorder and the cup of coffee back on the coffee table, and then I sat back down in my recliner chair and continued watching TV and continued sipping my coffee and continued listening in on Belinda's place and her phone.

I decided to stay in for the rest of the day until it was time for me to go out with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda.

It was time for me to get ready to go out with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda. So I turned the TV off and collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and took all three things into *my* room, and then I put the radios and the tape recorder on one of my beside tables, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later today, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and I took my bathrobe off and got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and turned the alarm clock off and looked at the time. The clock told me it was the time I wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and into my bathrobe, and then I went into the kitchen and made myself a pot of coffee, and then I went back into *my* room and got undressed, and then I went into the bathroom and shaved and showered. After that, I went back into my room and got dressed and collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's house, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and my Smith and Wesson and its shoulder, and then I took all of these things into my den and put the radios and the tape recorder on my desk and continued listening in on Belinda's house and her phone. Then I unlocked one of the drawers of my desk and put the Smith and Wesson and its shoulder holster into the drawer, and then I took out of the same drawer a derringer and its ankle holster. Then I checked the derringer to see if it were loaded. It was. Then I strapped the holster onto my ankle, and then I put the derringer into the ankle holster. The reason why I was going to wear the derringer on my ankle tonight instead of wear the Smith and Wesson in my shoulder holster was because there would be the possibility that the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, would rub up against me and feel the Smith and Wesson under my arm. And I didn't want this to happen. It'd make matters worse instead of better if I would. Then I collected the radios and the tape recorder and left the den and went into the living room, and then I put the radios and the tape recorder on the coffee table, and then I went into the kitchen and poured myself my first cup of coffee. I was going to need to wake up now.

Here inside my living room, I was sitting in my recliner chair and watching TV and sipping my coffee and listening in on Belinda's house and phone.

I continued drinking coffee and watching TV until it was time for me to go pick up the real Belinda or the phony Belinda for our date tonight. Then I finished drinking my last cup of coffee and turned the TV off and collected the radio to the bug inside Belinda's place, and the radio to the tap inside Belinda's phone, and the tape recorder, and then I went into the den and put the radios inside one of the drawers of my desk and locked up the drawer. I wasn't going to need to use the radios tonight. Since I was going to be with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda tonight. I put the tape recorder in my pocket. I didn't know if I were going to need to use *that* tonight or not. Then I left my place and closed and locked the door and got into my car and started it up and drove over to Belinda's place so I could pick up the real Belinda or the phony Belinda for our date tonight.

I arrived here at Belinda's place and pulled up to the curb in front of her place, and then I saw Belinda standing outside her place.

She was tall, plump, had long, thick shiny black hair, an oval shaped face, a creamy pallor complexion, thin beige lips, and she was wearing with white tank tops and blue

jeans and shiny black high heel boots, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shiny beige shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

When she saw me pull up to the curb, she ran out to my car and got into it and closed the door and smiled at me.

Her eyes were brown.

"Hi," she said. "You must be Frank."

"I am," I admitted. "And you must be Belinda."

"I am,"

Then the both of us shook hands and kissed each other. After that, we pulled away from the curb so we could keep our date tonight.

Along the way, we talked and got to know each other better and listened to a radio station that was playing rock and roll music.

We arrived here at the place we were going to have our date at: a casino just outside Bellingham, and then we parked inside the parking lot of the casino, and then we went into the casino, and the first thing we did was have dinner.

We were sitting at a booth now, and for dinner the both of us had steak and lobster and washed it down with a fine red wine, and for dessert, and we had Amaretto mousse.

After dinner we went into the casino and gambled for a while.

Now we were here inside the lounge and dancing with the rest of the people, and the group who was playing the songs was a group called the Potato Mashers.

Belinda and I were having a wonderful time. We danced most of the time, and some of the time, we sat down at our table and had drinks.

We were dancing again now. And then it happened: Belinda got on top of *our* table and danced on it.

CHAPTER IV

Everybody inside the lounge--including me--stopped and watched what Belinda was doing. Belinda liked what she was doing. She was smiling. *I* liked what she was doing, too. I smiled, also. And everyone else liked what she was doing, also. They, too, smiled.

I was taking Belinda back to her place now. It was time for her to go home. She had told me she had to work tomorrow. And because of this, she couldn't stay up too late tonight.

On our way back to Belinda's place, we listened to the same radio station we had listened to before when we had gone out to the casino. This time Belinda was clapping her hands to the music. She must have had a good time. Wild.

When we reached her place, we pulled up to the curb in front of Belinda's place, and then we came to a complete stop.

"I had a wonderful time," Belinda told me and smiled.

"So did I," *I* said and smiled, too. "We gotta do this again."

"Yeah, we should,"

Then we said good night to each other, and then Belinda got out of the car and walked up to her place and unlocked the door and went inside, and I watched her do these things, and then I pulled away from the curb so I could leave.

I was driving down the street now. I thought about Belinda's purse. That was something I hadn't searched. I hadn't been able to search it tonight. I was going to need to search it. And I was going to have to examine Belinda herself, too, so I could find if the girl who were living inside Belinda's home were the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda. Then I realized that I could do both of these things tonight.

I turned right onto the next cross street, and then I turned around and drove down Texas Street, and then I pulled up to the curb across the street from Belinda's place, and far away from Belinda's place, and then I parked my car here, and then I took my binoculars out of the glove compartment and looked through them at Belinda's place to see if she had gone to bed. There *was* a light on inside her place. Then the light was extinguished. After that, I put my binoculars back into the glove compartment, and then I started up my car, and then I drove down to Belinda's place without speeding so I won't arouse suspicion or alert the police.

When I got here to Belinda's place, I parked my car across the street from Belinda's place, and then I looked around to see if anyone were going to see me go into the back of Belinda's place. No one was around. Then I took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I crossed the street and got behind Belinda's place. Then I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the side door of Belinda's place, and then, as quickly and silently as I could, I opened the door and went into Belinda's place and closed and locked the door and put my lock pick set back into my pocket. Then I tip toed through Belinda's place and listened. It sounded like the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was sleeping. I did hear sleeping. Then I came to her room and put my ear to the door. It sounded like she *was* sleeping. Then I opened the door to her room as slowly and silently as I could so she wouldn't hear what I was doing to peek inside. She *was* sleeping. Then, I took the knock out drops out of my pocket, and then, slowly, silently, I tip toed over into her room and over to her bed, and then I put the knock out drops underneath the nostrils of her nose, and then she inhaled them. Now she was out cold. And she was going to be out

cold for hours. More than enough time for me to search her purse and her herself. Then I put the knock out drops back into my pocket, and then I looked for her purse. And found it. It was on her dresser. I went over to it and took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on, and then I shined the light of my penlight on the purse, and then I poured the contents of her purse onto the dresser, and then I shined the light of my penlight onto the contents of her purse, and then I looked through the contents. I even examined the contents of her beige wallet. But they didn't tell me which Belinda owned the wallet. Then I found something interesting: a cell phone. Susan hadn't told me that Belinda had a cell phone. Maybe she knew Belinda had a cell phone, but she didn't tell me, or maybe she didn't know that Belinda had a cell phone at all. But I was going to ask her if she knew Belinda had a cell phone or not. Then I picked up the cell phone to take a better look at it. I noticed the name and phone number of the last person who had called Belinda. There were no other names and phone numbers of anyone else who had called Belinda. Not even the names and phone numbers of all of those guys who had left messages on Belinda's answering machine saying they wanted to go out with her. Quickly I took my pen and notebook out of my pocket and wrote down in my notebook the name and phone number of the last person who had called Belinda. Then I put my pen and my notebook back into my pocket, and then I took a tap out of my pocket and put it inside Belinda's cell phone. Now I was going to be able to listen in any phone conversations that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda has with anyone talking to her on Belinda's cell phone. Then I took the radio to the tap inside Belinda's cell phone out of my pocket and turned it on and put the radio back into my pocket. Maybe the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, wasn't going to be able to make or take calls on her cell phone right now, since she was out cold, and she was going to be out cold for hours, but that didn't mean that someone wouldn't call her while she was out cold. There was that possibility. And another reason why I had turned on the radio to the tap inside her cell phone right now instead of later was because the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and someone else could have a phone conversation on Belinda's cell phone at anytime after the real Belinda or the phony Belinda comes to. And I wanted to be ready for that.

I didn't find anything else inside the contents of Belinda's purse that could tell me something, and then I put all of the contents of Belinda's purse back into her purse, and then I put Belinda's purse back where I had found it, and then I walked over to Belinda herself and shined the light of my penlight onto Belinda's face so I could look at her face to find out if this person who was sleeping inside Belinda's bed were the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda.

She wasn't wearing a mask of Belinda. There was nothing around her neck to indicate she *was* wearing a mask of Belinda. Which meant that this girl who was sleeping inside Belinda's bed had had plastic surgery done on her face to make her face look exactly like Belinda's face. Although I didn't see any scars from plastic surgery on her face. Which meant that the plastic surgeon or surgeons had done a good job at covering up the scars on her face. Or maybe this girl who was sleeping inside Belinda's bed was Belinda's exact look-a-like. Or maybe this girl who was sleeping inside Belinda's bed was the real Belinda. It had to be one of the three since it didn't look like this girl was wearing a mask of Belinda.

I snuck out of Belinda's place the same way I had snuck into it. I had finished searching Belinda's purse and examining her face. Now I went back to my car and got back into it and started it up, and then I drove away from Belinda's place without speeding so I won't alert the police or arouse suspicion. It was time now for me to find

out who this Eli Rositer was, then tell Susan what I find out about this Rositer, then tell her about the results of the search I had made of Belinda's purse and of the examination of Belinda's face I had made, and then tell her what Belinda and I had done on our date.

Eli Rositer was the last person who had called Belinda on her cell phone.

I was here at my place and here inside my den and running a check on this Rositer now. After I had run the check on Rositer, I printed out the information I got on Rositer. Then I turned the computer and the printer off and looked at the information on Rositer again.

Rositer was an operative for the Bellingham Security Agency.

The cell phone and Rositer were the only two new things in the investigation I had discovered. But at the moment, they didn't tell me anything. But maybe they would later. Or maybe they wouldn't. But I would find out.

But the examination of Belinda's face hadn't told me anything new. It hadn't even told me which of the two Belindas it was.

And then there was the date I had had with Belinda. I had wanted to see this change she had made after I had heard about what she had done at the other bar. That was another reason why I had asked her to go out to the casino with me.

Then I picked up the receiver of my landline phone here on my desk and called Susan.

"Hello?" she said. She sounded like she had been asleep.

"Ms Ballis?" I said. "This is Frank Hurley. I'm sorry if I woke you up, but I need to see you."

"About what?"

"About what I discovered in my investigation last night. But I don't want to tell you about it on the phone. It could get lengthy. Because of this, I'd like to meet you somewhere, then tell you about it."

"All right. Meet me at the Rib 'n' Reef at eight o'clock this morning. We'll have breakfast, *and*, you tell me what you discovered in your investigation last night."

"All right. This morning at eight o'clock at the Rib 'n' Reef." Then I hung up. After that, I took a folder out of one of the drawers of my desk and wrote CRANSTON OCCURRENCE CASE on it, and then I closed up the drawer, and then I put the information on I had gotten on Rositer into the folder, and then I put the folder into one of my filing cabinets, and then I closed and locked the cabinet. After that, I unlocked the drawer of my desk I kept my Smith and Wesson and its shoulder holster in and opened it, and then I took the Smith and Wesson and its shoulder holster out of the drawer and put them on my desk, and then I removed the derringer and its holster from my ankle, and then I put them into the same drawer I had put my Smith and Wesson and its shoulder holster in, and then I locked the drawer, and then I collected my Smith and Wesson and its shoulder holster and turned off the light, and then I left the den and went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I put the radio to the tap inside Belinda's cell phone on one of the bedside tables so I could listen to it, although I was going to be sleeping, and then I took my tape recorder out of my pocket and put it on the same table I had put the radio to the bug inside Belinda's cell phone on, and then I took my Smith and Wesson out of my shoulder holster and put it underneath the pillow, and then I tossed the shoulder holster onto the dresser, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned off the light, and then I got into bed and went to sleep.

The reason why I wanted to listen in on Belinda's cell phone and not her landline phone was because her cell phone could tell me something. Whereas her landline phone may not tell me something. The only thing that would happen on her landline phone would be her talking on the landline phone to people who weren't in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger when she'd be playing the part of Belinda, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger--including those guys who had left those messages on Belinda's answering saying that they had heard about her and wanted to go out with her, and the other guys who had gone out with her and wanted to go out with her again.

In other words, the landline phone would be a dead end.

The next morning, Susan and I were here at the Rib 'n' Reef. Sitting at a booth and waiting for our breakfasts we had ordered and sipping coffee and I told her about what I had discovered in my investigation last night.

"Well, I didn't know that Belinda has a cell phone," Susan said after I had finished. She looked and sounded surprised. Like she really didn't know that Belinda had a cell phone. She wasn't lying. "And neither did anyone else."

Well. It looked like Susan just save me the job of asking her if she knew if Belinda had a cell phone or not. "Which means that this cell phone must be something new," I conjectured. "And if someone *is* impersonating Belinda, then perhaps this person who *is* impersonating Belinda is using the cell phone to talk to someone else who's in on this plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Whatever it is. But she doesn't want to talk to this someone else about the plot on Belinda's landline phone. Because if she does, there'll be a record of the phone conversation in the landline phone bill. And then the name and the phone number of that person she talks to about this plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger will be traced. But even if people see the phony Belinda using the cell phone to talk to the other person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, the phony Belinda could say anything she wants about why she has a cell phone and it wouldn't arouse suspicion. And she doesn't have to tell anyone what her cell phone number is, too. And won't. And she only uses the cell phone to talk to this other person about the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger."

"Makes sense,"

"Yeah, it does. And the person she could be talking to on the cell phone about the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger could be this Eli Rositer. The cell phone did say that he was the last person who called Belinda. I ran a check on this Rositer." Then I took the information I had on Rositer out of my pocket and unfolded the papers and gave them to Susan, and then Susan read the information.

After she had finished reading the information, I spoke to her: "I think that what we should do now is continue investigating this Rositer to find out if he is or isn't working with the real Belinda or the phony Belinda on this plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger."

"Good idea. All right. Let's do it."

"Do *you* know this Rositer?"

"No, I don't,"

"Have you ever seen or heard of him?"

"No,"

"Rositer may have been the one the phony Belinda talked to about those people buying the act about Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Rositer may

have been inside Belinda's house when the phony Belinda talked to him about the act, and when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back the money you borrowed from her, and then you overheard the phony Belinda and Rositer talking about this act. Or maybe the phony Belinda was talking to Rositer about the act on her cell phone when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back the money you borrowed from her and you overheard what she and Rositer were talking about."

"Yeah,"

"Or maybe the real Belinda talked to Rositer about those people buying the act that Belinda is now a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Rositer may have been inside Belinda's place when the real Belinda talked to him about those people who bought the act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and you overheard them talking about this when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back the money you borrowed from Belinda, or the maybe the real Belinda was talking to Rositer about those people buying the act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger on her cell phone when you went over to Belinda's place to pay her back the money you borrowed from her and you overheard what she and Rositer were talking about."

"Well, then, if the real Belinda did tell this Rositer, this person we don't know, that those people did buy the act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then why is she pretending to be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and why is she reporting her putting on this act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger to a person we don't know?"

"I don't know. But maybe we'll find out. But whatever the reason is, that conversation about the people buying the act that Belinda is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger that the real Belinda and the other person were having and that you overheard when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back the money you borrowed from her *is* suspicious. Not only that, if the real Belinda *is* the one who owns that cell phone, then maybe *she's* the one who's talking to Rositer about Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger on the cell phone and not on the landline so that there won't be any record of the phone conversation on the landline phone bill. And the real Belinda can say anything she wants about why she has a cell phone if anyone sees her using the cell phone whenever she has to talk to the person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and it wouldn't arouse suspicion. And she doesn't tell anyone what her cell phone number is, either. Especially since she knows that she doesn't have to tell anyone what her cell phone number is. And the only time she uses the cell phone is when she calls the other person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger and talks to him about the plot. I also tapped Belinda's cell phone, but I haven't heard her make or take any more phone calls on the cell phone."

"Which means that she and this other person haven't got anything more about this plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger to talk about, or they haven't got anything more about this plot to talk about right now."

"That's right. It has to be one or the other."

"But if the phony Belinda told this Rositer that those people bought the act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, then why is *she* pretending to be a Casper Milquetoast swinger, and why is *she* reporting her putting on this act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger to a person we don't know?"

"I don't know. But maybe we'll find out. But whatever the reason is, the conversation about the people buying the act that Belinda is a Casper Milquetoast turned

swinger that the phony Belinda and the other person were having and that you overheard when you went over to Belinda's place to pay back the money you borrowed from her *is* suspicious. Not only that, if the phony Belinda *is* the one who owns that cell phone, then maybe *she's* the one who's talking to Rositer about Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger on the cell phone and not on the landline so that there won't be any record of the phone conversation on the landline bill. And the phony Belinda can say anything she wants about why she has a cell phone if anyone sees her using the cell phone whenever she has to talk to the person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and it wouldn't arouse suspicion. And she doesn't tell anyone what her cell phone number is, either. Especially since she knows that she doesn't have to tell anyone what her cell phone number is. And the only time she uses the cell phone is when she calls the other person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger and talks to him about the plot."

"Which means that she and the other person haven't got anything more about the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger to talk about, or they haven't got anything more about the plot to talk about right now."

"That's right. It has to be one or the other. But I'll continue listening in on Belinda's cell phone. Now. As for how we continue investigating Rositer, you should give me back the information I got on Rositer and I'll put it back in my file I have on the Cranston occurrence. You shouldn't have this information with you. If the real Belinda, or the phony Belinda, or the other person who's in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, notices you have this information, they'll call off the plot, or they'll carry out the plot and keep you from telling anyone about the plot."

Susan gave me back the information I had on Rositer, and then I folded up the papers and put them back into my pocket, and then I spoke to Susan again: "Also, after we're done here, and after I go back to my place and put the information on Rositer back into my file I have on the Cranston occurrence, I'm going to work out a plan on how to continue investigating Rositer."

"All right,"

"And while I'm working out this plan, you don't tell anyone I'm working out this plan. Don't even tell Belinda I'm working out this plan. And after I work out this plan, I'll tell you what the plan is and carry out the plan."

"All right,"

"Also, we don't tell anyone that we're having this meeting. As far as *we're* concerned, I was here at the restaurant having breakfast, and then I saw *you* come in, and then I asked you if you'd like to join me, and you accepted. And then we met and talked, too. But if anyone wants to know who it was you were having breakfast with, don't tell them my real name and my real occupation. Instead, tell them my name is George Ferguson and I sell insurance."

"All right,"

Susan and I were having our breakfasts now. Susan was having bacon and eggs, eggs sunny side up, and hash browns, and she washed all of this down with orange juice and more coffee, and I was having country gravy and biscuits and sausages and hash browns, and washed all of *this* down with orange juice and more coffee.

While we ate, we didn't talk about the Cranston occurrence any more. Instead, we talked about other things.

We felt better after we had eaten. Now we were having more coffee.

It was time for us to leave now. I offered to pay Susan's check, and then I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid Susan's check and mine, and then Susan and I left the restaurant, and then Susan got into her car and started it up and left the restaurant so she could go to work, and *I* got into *my* car and started it up and left the restaurant so I could go home and put the information I had on Rositer back into my file I had on the Cranston occurrence and work out the plan on how to continue investigating Rositer.

CHAPTER V

Rositer's place was on James Street. A nice gray two storey house with a dark charcoal gray roof and matching garage.

I had parked my car a few yards away from his place and on the other side of the street and looked through my binoculars at his place to find out when Rositer was going to go to bed so I could get inside his place and render him unconscious and tap his landline phone and his cell phone and search and bug his place. I had worked out my plan on how to continue investigating Rositer and had told Susan how I was going to continue investigating Rositer, and then I had looked for and had found Rositer and had been able to watch and follow him wherever he had gone and had and seen him come back here to his place after he had gotten off of work, and he was still here at his place. Now I saw Rositer turn off the light inside his place. Then I put my binoculars back into the glove compartment, and then I looked around to see if anyone were going to see me sneak into Rositer's place. No one was here. Then I took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I crossed the street and got behind Rositer's place, and then I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the side door of Rositer's place, and then, as quickly and silently as I could, I walked into Rositer's place and closed and locked the door. Then I put my lock pick set back into my pocket and took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shined the light into the house, and then I looked for Rositer's room.

I found it. It was at the end of the hall. The door to his room was closed. When I reached his room, I put my ear to the door to hear what was going on inside his room. I heard sleeping. Which meant that Rositer must be sleeping right now. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I turned my penlight off and put it back into my pocket, and then, as slowly and silently as I could, I turned the knob of the door of Rositer's room to open the door and peek into Rositer's room. Then I saw Rositer inside his bed and sleeping. Then, as quickly and silently as I could, I took the knock out drops out of my pocket, and then, as quickly and silently as I could, I tip toed over to Rositer's bed, and then I put the knock out drops underneath the nostrils of Rositer's nose, and then Rositer inhaled the knock out drops, and then Rositer passed out. Now he was out cold. And he was going to be out cold for hours. More than enough time for me to do what I had to do. Then I put the knock out drops back into my pocket, and then I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on, and then I shined the light into Rositer's room, and then I searched his room. But I didn't find anything here. Then I noticed the items on Rositer's dresser. One of them was his cell phone. I went over to his dresser and picked up the cell phone and looked at it. It didn't say that he had made any phone calls. But, of course, that didn't mean that he wouldn't make phone calls later. Then I took a tap out of my pocket and put it inside Rositer's cell phone and put the cell phone back on the dresser, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the tap I had put inside Rositer's cell phone and turned it on, and then I put the radio back into my pocket. Maybe Rositer wouldn't be able to make or take any phone calls right now, since he was out cold, and he was going to be out cold for hours, but that didn't mean that he wouldn't be able to make or take phone calls after he comes to. Then I left Rositer's room and searched the rest of his house and bugged it and searched it and tapped his landline phone. But what I didn't find anything inside Rositer's house. Then I searched Rositer's garage. But that didn't tell me anything, either. And then there was his car. It was here inside his garage: a goldenrod Monte Carlo with black hard top.

I picked the lock of his car and got into his car and searched the car. But the car didn't tell me anything, either.

I was leaving Rositer's place now. I had finished searching his place. Now I reached my car and unlocked it and got into it and started it up, and then I pulled away from the curb and drove down the street without speeding so I won't alert the police or arouse suspicion.

As I drove away from Rositer's place, I looked at my watch. Six minutes to midnight.

Tomorrow I could call Susan and tell her I had searched Rositer's place and had bugged it and tapped both his cell and landline phones and what I had discovered in my search of Rositer's place. No need to do it right now. Then I was getting hungry. So I might as well eat while I had the chance to eat. So I looked around for a place to eat at.

I found it. Now I was here inside the restaurant and sitting at a counter and sipping coffee I had ordered and waiting for the meal I had ordered. I also thought.

My putting Rositer's place under surveillance, and what I had discovered inside his place, and what the real Belinda or the phony Belinda was doing now, told me something: except for that conversation that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person had had at Belinda's place and that Susan had overheard when Susan had gone over to Belinda's place to pay Belinda back the money she had borrowed from Belinda, it looked like there wasn't anything suspicious going on. And it looked like something suspicious wasn't going to happen, either. It just looked like there was no plot to make Belinda look like a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. It just looked like Belinda had changed for the better and she was going about her daily routine. And she had made this change because she had wanted to change for the better. And she had done it for herself. No one else. And it looked like Rositer was going about *his* daily routine, too. Or maybe something suspicious was going to happen later. And then, at that time, the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person or persons who were in on their plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger were going to do their parts in the plot. Until then, they do what they're doing now. And then there was something else: if something suspicious *were* going to happen later, then whatever it was that was going to happen later wasn't going to happen right away. Instead, it was going to happen at a later time. And that would give the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person or persons who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger time to do what they're doing now that had to do with the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Especially the real Belinda or the phony Belinda. One of them would have time to put on this act of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. To make sure that people saw her put on this act and buy it. And another reason why the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person or persons who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger had time to do what they're doing now that had to do with the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger was because they weren't going to arouse suspicion. If they were going to pull off the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger right away, then their pulling off the plot right away would expose them and the plot. And then they'd be caught or killed or escape and the plot would be prevented.

I was eating my meal I had ordered now: cheeseburger and fries. And I washed it down with more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I put a nice tip on the counter and paid my check and left. It was time now for me to go home and go to bed.

The next morning, I was up early, and then I had my breakfast, and then I called Susan and told her I searched and bugged Rositer's place and tapped his cell and landline phones and what I had discovered at Rositer's place. After that, we hung up, and then I continued watching TV and drinking coffee while I continue listening in on Belinda's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone. My listening in on their cell phones was all I could do until Susan does what *she* was going to do in helping me continue investigating Rositer. Between the time I had tapped Rositer's cell phone and up to now, Belinda and Rositer hadn't called each other and hadn't talked to each other. Which meant that the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person hadn't had anything more about the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger to talk about, or, they hadn't had anything more about the plot to talk about right now, or, there was no plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger at all. That the real Belinda had changed for the better, and she was taking care of her own business, and so was the other person. One of the three.

There was something else about the plot to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger that I wondered about: if something *were* going to happen, then what would the target of the plot to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger be? It had to be something, something that would require the real Belinda or the phony Belinda playing the part of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, something that the plot to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger was created to target. Or maybe the plot to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger was created to target some one. There was *that* possibility. Or maybe the plot to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger was created to target both some one and some thing. There was *that* possibility.

After I had called Susan and had told her I had searched Rositer's place and had tapped his cell phone and landline phones and had searched and had bugged his place and had also told her what I had discovered at Rositer's place, Susan called Belinda at work to do what *she* was going to do to help me continue investigate Rositer.

"Research," Belinda said.

"Hello. Belinda?"

"Speaking,"

"It's Susan. I need to talk to you. It's important."

"What's it about?"

"Well, I can't talk to you about in on the phone. I'm going to have to talk to you about it in person."

"All right. Why don't you meet me here at work and you can talk to me on my break. My first break's at ten. I'll be out in the parking lot."

"Fine," Then Susan hung up and called me and told me she had just called Belinda and made her appointment to do what *she* was going to do in helping me continue investigate Rositer. Then Susan told me where and when she was going to do what *she* was going to do in helping me investigate Rositer. After that, we hung up.

It was ten o'clock now, and Susan and Belinda were out here inside the parking lot of Consolidated Industries and inside Belinda's car.

"You remember Frank Hurley, don't you?" Susan asked Belinda. "the guy I told you about and I told him about you and he wanted to go out with you?"

"Yeah," Belinda answered eagerly, eating a poor boy sandwich and washing it down with Coke. "Neat guy. I hope I see him again. He's something."

"Yeah, he is. Well. I think someone is trying to force him into doing something he doesn't have to do."

"What?!" Belinda exclaimed.

"That's right. I went over to his place one night to borrow a video from him? When I got to his the door, I heard some yelling inside. It sounded like a woman was yelling at him. But I could only hear one of the things this woman said to Frank: 'You're going to help me! Or else!' And then Frank told this woman that she couldn't force him to do what she wanted him to do. Then I knocked on the door. I didn't want Frank to know I was at the door and listening in on what he and the woman were talking about. Frank answered the door, and then I told him why I went over to his place, and then he let me in, and he went into his room to get the video I wanted to borrow from him, and while I was waiting, I introduced myself to the woman, but she was reluctant to introduce herself to me. But she did tell me her name. And after Frank gave me the video, I left, and then I heard Frank and the woman continue yelling at each other. And when I went back to Frank's place a couple of days later to return the video I borrowed from him, I saw the same woman storming out of his place. Then I returned the video to Frank, and then I noticed Frank looked like he was upset about something. I asked him what was wrong, but he didn't tell me; I even offered him to help him, but he told me to leave him alone. Then I left."

"Wow!" Belinda looked and sounded shocked after Susan had finished. "Boy. It does look like this woman is trying to force him into doing something that he doesn't want to do."

"Yes, it does. And I want to find out what it is this woman is trying to force him into doing and stop her from doing it. And I need your help to do it. I don't think I can do this alone."

"All right," Belinda said. "I'll help you."

"Good. Now. Here are the name and photograph of the woman who's trying to force Frank into doing whatever she wants him to do. I managed to find out who this woman is." Then Susan took out of a manila envelope the photograph of the woman who was trying to force Frank into doing whatever it was she wanted him to do and showed it to Belinda. "Her name is Trudy Warner," Susan continued. "She's a temporary secretary." Then she told Belinda where Trudy lived. Then Susan and Belinda agreed on where and when they could meet and work out their plan to find out what it was that Trudy was trying to force Frank into doing and stop her from doing it. After that, Belinda told Susan that her break was up and she had to go back to work. Then both women got out of Belinda's car, and then Belinda went back to work, and Susan went back to *her* car and got into it, and then she started it up, and then she drove out of the parking lot. Then she took her cell phone out of her purse and called me and told me she had just done what she had to do in helping me continue investigate Rositer.

"Great," I said after Susan had finished. Then we hung up. After that, I continued listening in on Belinda's cell phone, and Rositer's cell phone, and watching TV and sipping coffee. Listening in on Belinda's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone was the only other thing in my assignment I could until Belinda makes her move.

While I continued listening in on Belinda's cell phone, and Rositer's cell phone, and watching TV, and sipping coffee, I also thought about a couple of things; the first thing was that Belinda hadn't asked Susan why Susan hadn't gone to the police and hadn't told

them that "Trudy was trying to force me into doing something I didn't want to do" after Susan had told Belinda she needed Belinda's help to find out why "Trudy was trying to force me into doing something I didn't want to do." Which meant that if Belinda and Susan had gone to the police and had told the police that "Trudy was trying to force me into doing something I didn't want to do," a police investigation of "Trudy trying to force me into doing something I didn't have to do" would bring out into the open the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Or, the police investigation of "Trudy trying to force me into doing something I didn't want to do" would slow or stop the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person or persons who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger from carrying out the plot. And the real Belinda or the phony Belinda and the other person or persons who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger couldn't have that.

And the second thing I thought about was that Susan had told me that after she had done what she had to do in her helping me continue investigate Rositer, she had told me that Belinda had to go back to work. Her break was up. If this were true, then Belinda was going to make her move when she had the time to make her move. Which meant that she wasn't going to make her move right after she had had her break and before she goes back to work. If she would, her boss would want to know why she was late for work. And because of this, she was going to have to make her move at a better time, a time in which she wouldn't arouse suspicion.

CHAPTER VI

Two hours later, I heard Belinda make a phone call. I looked at the clock in the living room. It told me it was three minutes to noon. Then I turned the tape recorder on and listened. It sounded like Belinda was phoning Rositer. I recognized Rositer's phone number. It *was* Rositer's phone number she was dialing. Then I heard Rositer's phone ring.

"Hello?" a male voice said.

"Hello. Eli?"

"Yeah?"

"It's Arlene,"

"Arlene. What's up?"

"Two hours ago, Susan Ballis came over to work and told me that this girl is trying to force one of these guys I went out with into doing something he doesn't want to do. Susan asked me to help her find out what it is this girl is trying to force this guy into doing and stop her from doing it. I told her I'd help her do it. The reason why I called you and told you about this is because Susan finding out what it is this girl is trying to force the guy into doing and stopping her from doing it and my helping Susan find out who what it is this girl is trying to force the guy into doing and stop her from doing it could take time."

"Yes, it could," Rositer said. "But that doesn't mean you won't be able to do *your* part in what we're going to do. Jordan won't be coming back from Europe for another month. So that'll give you more than enough time to help Susan Ballis find out what it is this girl is trying to force this guy into doing and stop her from doing it. But if you and Susan Ballis don't find out what it is this girl is trying to force this guy into doing and stop her from doing it before Jordan gets back from his vacation, let me know. Maybe I can help. All right?"

"All right,"

"Another good reason why you should help Susan Ballis find out what it is this girl is trying to force this guy into doing and stop from her doing it is because we don't want to arouse suspicion. If you don't help her find out what it is this girl is trying to force the guy into doing and stop her from doing it, you'll arouse suspicion. And Susan might even look into why you're not helping her find out what it is that girl is trying to force that guy into doing and stop her from doing it. And we can't have that. The important thing is we gotta stay out of trouble until we've done what we have to do. So help Susan find out what it is this girl is trying to force this guy going into doing and stop her from doing it. All right?"

"All right."

"Good. Anything else?"

"No. That's it. Bye."

"Bye," Then Rositer hung up.

So did this Arlene.

End of phone conversation. I turned the tape recorder off and played back the recording of the phone conversation and listened to it. After I heard the phone conversation, I turned the tape recorder off and thought.

Someone named Arlene must be impersonating Belinda. The real Belinda hadn't called Rositer and hadn't told him about her meeting with Susan about "Susan's finding out what it was this girl was trying to force me into doing and stop her from doing it."

Which meant that the girl who had just called Rositer and had told him about "Susan's finding out what it was this girl was trying to force me into doing and stop her from doing it" must be the phony Belinda. Belinda's middle name wasn't Arlene. Instead, it was Charlotte. Susan had told me that. And then there was something else: Arlene hadn't mentioned my name or Trudy's when she had told Rositer about "Susan's wanting to find out what it was this girl was trying to force me into doing and stop her from doing it." Which meant that this Arlene and Rositer weren't interested in me or Trudy. If they were, as well as they were interested in the plan to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, or if they were interested in me or Trudy and not the plan to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, Rositer would have asked Arlene who this girl was that was trying to force me into doing something, and he would have also asked Arlene who this guy was that the girl was trying to force into doing whatever it was she wanted him to do, and then the both of them would have found out who this guy and this girl were.

And the plan to make Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger had to do with someone named Jordan. Whoever Jordan was. And I was going to have to find out who this Jordan was. And by doing that, I called Susan and told her about the phone conversation that this Arlene and Rositer had just had, and then I asked her who this Jordan was.

"His name is Peter Jordan," Susan told me after I had finished. "He's the head of Consolidated Industries. And right now he's on vacation. For another month. His vacation's for two months. And he's taking his vacation in Europe."

"I see,"

"So someone is impersonating Belinda,"

"Yeah. But we still don't know why this Arlene is impersonating Belinda or where the real Belinda is or if the real Belinda is still alive or if she's dead right now," Then I suggested to Susan that she and Trudy and I meet somewhere and continue talking about this phone conversation that this Arlene and Rositer had just had *and* talk about what to do next. Then we decided on where and when we could meet and talk about these things and have dinner. After that, we hung up, and then I called Trudy and told her everything that Susan and I had just talked about on the phone. Then we hung up. Then I went back to listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone and watching TV and sipping coffee. And that had to be Arlene's cell phone that I was listening in on instead of Belinda's cell phone since Belinda didn't own a cell phone.

I also thought about something else: when Arlene had told Rositer that Susan had gone over to Consolidated Industries and had told Arlene that "this girl who was trying to force me into doing something and that she needed Arlene's help to find out what it was that this girl was trying to force me into doing and stop her from doing it," she had then told Rositer that Susan had gone over to Consolidated Industries and had told Arlene that "this girl who was trying to force me into doing something and that she needed Arlene's help to find out what it was that this girl was trying to force me into doing something and stop her from doing it," two hours ago, and at that time Rositer hadn't asked Arlene why she hadn't told him what Susan had told her about this "this girl who was trying to force me into doing something and stop her from doing it." Which meant that Rositer must have known that Belinda worked today and he knew that Belinda worked at Consolidated Industries. Then I looked at the clock here inside my living room to keep track of time. It was twelve thirty-eight right now.

There wasn't anything else about my assignment I could do until I keep my appointment with Susan and Trudy. Which was tonight at seven o'clock here at my place. So I continued watching TV and sipping coffee and listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone, and after a while I took a nap, and then I got up and shaved and showered, and then I got dressed and went into the kitchen and prepared dinner. Between the time I had talked to Trudy and Susan about the phone conversation that Arlene and Rositer had had and up to now, Arlene and Rositer hadn't called each other to talk about the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger or about anything else.

I was here inside the living room now. I had finished making dinner for Trudy and Susan and me, and now it was keeping warm. Now I was sitting in my recliner chair and watching TV and sipping Coke this time and listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone. But Arlene and Rositer still hadn't made phone calls to each other to talk about the plot to make making Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, or about anything else.

There was a knock on the front door. I got out of the chair and went to the door and opened it.

Susan was standing outside. She was wearing a gray tweed coat and a white blouse and blue jeans and shiny black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her purse, which was resting on her right shoulder.

I pulled the door back to let her come in, and she came in, and I closed the door. Then I offered her some wine and she accepted, and then I went to the sideboard to get the wine for her, but before I reached the sideboard, there was another knock at the door. I turned around and went to the door and opened it.

Standing outside the door was Trudy, "the woman who was trying to force me into doing something,"

Her last name really *was* Warner, and she really *was* a temporary secretary, and she was also an operative for me. And she had done work for me before, too. And I had told Trudy that I was looking into the Cranston occurrence and what I discovered about it up to now and asked her if she could help Susan and me continue looking into the Cranston occurrence. And she had agreed to help us look into it, and then I had told her what she could do to help Susan and me look into the Cranston occurrence.

She was working undercover on helping Susan and me continue looking into the Cranston occurrence. I had told her to play the part of "Trudy Warner, the woman who was trying to force me into doing something."

Trudy was tall, slender, had long, thick red hair with some brown streaks in it, brown eyes, a tapering oval shaped face, a creamy pallor complexion, full, moist burgundy lips, and she was wearing a short sleeve green turtleneck sweater and olive green jeans and black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her shiny white shoulder strap handbag, which was resting on her right shoulder.

I pulled back the door to let Trudy come in, and she came in, and I closed the door, and offered her something to drink. She said she wanted white wine. So I went to the sideboard to prepare her drink and Susan's.

Susan and Trudy had already met. When I had told Susan that Trudy was an operative for me, as well as she was a temporary secretary, and that she had worked for me before, and that I had asked her to help Susan and me continue looking into the Cranston occurrence, I had introduced Susan and Trudy to each other at the time the three of us had worked out our plan to continue looking into the Cranston occurrence.

Trudy and Susan and I were here inside the living room and sitting around the table and having dinner now. We were having fried chicken and garlic mashed potatoes and whole kernel corn, and washed all of this down with white wine, and for dessert we had apple pie and washed it down with more white wine. And during dinner and dessert, we talked about other things and not about the Cranston occurrence.

We were sitting around the coffee table now. We had finished eating dinner. Now we were sipping more white wine. We also listened to the recording of the phone conversation that this Arlene and Rositer had had this morning after Susan had gone over to Consolidated Industries and had told Arlene that Susan had found out that "this girl was trying to force me into doing this something and Susan wanted to find out what it was this girl was trying to force me into doing and stop her from doing it."

After Trudy and Susan and I had heard the recording, I turned the tape recorder off, and then Trudy asked me who Peter Jordan was and I told her.

"So there's a plot to do something to this Peter Jordan," Trudy said.

"Yeah," I confirmed. Then I looked at Susan and spoke to her: "Ms Ballis, when did you first hear about Belinda dancing on that table in that bar?"

"A few days after Peter went on his vacation,"

Then I thought. Then I spoke: "Well, that makes sense: if Peter found out about Belinda changing for the better before he went on vacation, Arlene and Rositer and anyone else who maybe in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger would call off the plot because they wouldn't have time to execute the plot and make sure that people bought the act. Which is what they want to do several weeks before Peter meets the new Belinda. And another thing that Arlene and Rositer and anyone else who maybe in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger must have done was find out when Peter was going to go on his vacation and for how long before they worked out and execute their plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Giving them enough time to work out and execute their plot. They didn't want to hurry on working out and executing the plot. If they would, they'd arouse suspicion. Or worse, expose themselves and get caught or killed or escape. And they wouldn't be able to carry out the plot."

"Yeah," Susan said. "But why would Rositer and anyone else working with him on this plot want this Arlene to impersonate Belinda and make it look like Belinda is a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and what does this have to do with Peter?"

"I don't know. But whatever the reason is, it requires Arlene to play the role of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And until Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe, Arlene continues playing the role of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and the other people working with her on the plot continue taking care of their own businesses. There's nothing else they can do until Peter gets back from his vacation."

"Well, what can *we* do?"

"Well, *we* could continue listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone and continue putting Rositer under surveillance and put Arlene under surveillance and try to find out who Arlene is and find out what Arlene and Rositer and these other people who are in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger want from Peter that's requiring them to carry out the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. It has to be some thing or some one or both that they want from Peter. But we can't go to Arlene and tell them we suspect her of impersonating Belinda. She'll say she's not impersonating Belinda. She'll say that she *is* Belinda. And

she'll have the papers to prove it. She'll say that she doesn't know what we're talking about. She'll say whatever she wants. And then we won't find out why she's impersonating Belinda and where the real Belinda is and if the real Belinda is still alive or if she's dead right now."

"Well, what about having her listen to that recording of her having that phone conversation with Rositer?"

"Won't do any good. She'll clam up on us. And to make matters worse, she bring a lawyer in on this. And if we arrest her for impersonating Belinda, we won't know why she's impersonating Belinda, and we won't know where the real Belinda is, and we won't know if the real Belinda is still alive, or if she's dead right now."

"And telling Belinda's friends that we suspect Arlene of impersonating Belinda won't do any good," Trudy pointed out to Susan. "She'll say she's not impersonating Belinda. That she *is* Belinda. And she'll have the papers to prove it. And having them listen to that recording that Arlene and Roister had this morning won't d any good. Arlene will deny that she had that conversation with Rositer. That she doesn't know Rositer. As it is right now, we don't have enough evidence that says Arlene is impersonating Belinda and why."

"And then there's something else," I pointed to Susan. "just because Arlene is impersonating Belinda doesn't mean that Arlene is impersonating Belinda for a bad and illegal reason. Maybe she is. Or maybe she's impersonating Belinda for a good and legal reason. There is that possibility. So if we find out that Arlene is impersonating Belinda for a good and legal reason, we're going to have to let her continue impersonating Belinda for that reason. But if we find out she's impersonating Belinda for a bad and illegal reason, then we can tell the police."

"I could help out on continuing to listen in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone and continue putting Rositer under surveillance and put Arlene under surveillance and find out who Arlene is and find out what Arlene and Rositer and those other people want from Peter," Trudy said to me. "That would postpone Ms Ballis's and Belinda's finding out what I'm trying to force you into doing and stop me from doing it."

"Yeah," I said. "I like that. That might help."

Then Susan and Trudy and I talked about what our individual assignments were.

After we had talked about what they were, Trudy and Susan left, and I went into the kitchen and washed the dishes and listened to the clock radio. After that, I looked at the clock radio. It told me it was six minutes to eleven.

Time for me to turn in. I was going to need to get a good night's sleep so I can carry out *my* individual assignment tomorrow. So I turned off the light and left the kitchen, and then I went into the living room and turned off the light, and then I went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

CHAPTER VII

The next morning, I was here inside my den and sitting behind my desk and calling the Bellingham Security Agency, the place that Rositer worked at. I had an idea on how I could find out who Arlene was. Maybe it'd work. Maybe it wouldn't. I was going to find out.

"Good morning," a female voice said. "Bellingham Security Agency."

"Good morning," I said. "I need to get to have Arlene's phone number. I need to get a hold of her about something. It's important."

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't give you her home phone number."

"I understand, but she called me. She just called me a minute ago and said she needed to talk to me about something important. But I'm afraid I forgot to write down her phone number."

"Oh, I see, Then the woman told me Arlene's phone number, and I wrote it down on the pad on my desk. Then I thanked the woman, and then she and I hung up. After that, I looked up the phone number the woman at Bellingham Security had given me in my criss cross directory. And then I found out what I needed to know: Arlene's last name was Donnelly. And the phone number that the woman at Bellingham Security had given me was Arlene's cell phone number. The criss cross directory also told me Arlene's landline phone number and where Arlene lived. Then I got on the computer to find out what else I can about Arlene.

The computer told me that Arlene was an operative for Bellingham Security. Like Rositer. Then, I stopped suddenly and looked, my gaze became fixed.

There was also a picture of Arlene in the information I had just gotten on her. She looked exactly like Belinda. In every detail. She was Belinda's exact double. I couldn't believe what I was looking at. So that was it: when these people came up with the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, they knew that Arlene looked exactly like Belinda. And because of this they weren't going to have to change another girl's face with plastic surgery to make her look like Belinda, or have the girl wear a mask of Belinda, then have her impersonate Belinda. Instead, all they had done was have this look-a-like play the part of Belinda being a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger in their plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger.

I printed out the information on Arlene, and then I turned off the computer and the printer and read all of the information I got on Arlene. After that, I unlocked the filing cabinet and withdrew the file on the Cranston occurrence from the cabinet, and then I put into the file the information I had just gotten on Arlene, and then I put the file back into the cabinet and closed and locked the cabinet. After that, I went into my room so I could get dressed and go over to Arlene's place and search it.

I was driving over to Arlene's place now. I also thought about what I could find at Arlene's place that could or couldn't tell me something: Arlene's car. She would have to leave *her* car at her place while she was impersonating Belinda. She would have to drive around in Belinda's car for as long as she was impersonating Belinda. If she drove around in *her* car instead of drive around in Belinda's car while she was impersonating Belinda, the people who knew Belinda would know that there was something going on and look into it. And Arlene and Rositer and the other people who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger couldn't have that.

Arlene's place was on Meridian Street. A nice two storey brown house with a gun metal blue roof and matching garage.

I was driving away from Arlene's place now. I had searched her place and had bugged it and had tapped her landline phone, but I hadn't found anything. Not even her car had told me something when I had searched that. Her car was in her garage. It was a light blue Toyota Tercel.

The only thing Arlene's car told me was that Arlene's car was in her garage. Which meant that Arlene and Rositer and the other people who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger wanted Arlene's car to be inside her garage during their carrying out the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And that made sense: people would think that Arlene had gone somewhere, and no one would know when she was coming back. If her car had been parked against the curb in front of her place, they'd know she was at home and go over to her place and see her about something. And no one noticing her car would help her and Rositer and the other people who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger carry out their plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger.

I was here at home now. Inside my den and listening in on Arlene's place and her landline phone as well as I was listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone.

Personally I thought it was going to be a waste of time listening in on Arlene's place and her landline phone. Arlene was going to have to stay away from her place and her car and not make phone calls to her place for as long as she impersonated Belinda. If anyone would find out that she went back to her place for some reason, or made a phone call to her place for some reason, or both, while she was impersonating Belinda, someone would wonder why Belinda was going over to Arlene's place or wonder why Belinda was making a call to Arlene's place or both. Maybe even look into it. And that would expose what Arlene was doing. Which Arlene and Rositer and the other people who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger couldn't have.

In other words, Arlene's place and car and landline phone were going to be dead ends.

I also called Susan and told her what I had found out about Arlene and what I had done at her place and what I had discovered at her place and what I was doing now.

"So that confirms the fact that someone *is* impersonating Belinda," Susan said after I had finished.

"Yeah," I confirmed. "But we still don't know why she's impersonating Belinda, and we still don't know where the real Belinda is, and we still don't if the real Belinda is still alive, or if she's dead right now."

"Of course,"

"Have *you* found out anything?" Susan's job was to find out if there were some one or some thing that Arlene and Rositer and the other people who were in the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger would be interested in that had to do with Peter. By doing that, she had to find out if there were something going on, or if something were going to happen, that had to do with Peter. I don't think there was something that had happened that had to do with Peter. If there were, Arlene and Rositer and the other people who were in on the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger would have said or done something to indicate they had done something that had to do with Peter. And no one else had done anything that had to do with Peter, either.

"No, I haven't."

"Which means that there's nothing going on now that has to do Peter. But something will happen later that has to do with Peter. I don't think it'd be something that already happened that had to do with Peter. If it *did* already happen, and Arlene and Rositer and the other people who are in the plot to make Belinda be a Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, did what they had to do to, they would have said or done something to indicate they did it, although they could have kept what they did a secret, or they didn't keep what they did a secret, but they didn't tell anyone that they did what they did that had to do with Peter, and they didn't tell them that they were in on it. They only told them what happened. And no one else did anything that had to do with Peter, either."

"Of course. What about Trudy? Has *she* found out anything?"

"I don't know. But I'm going to call her and find out. *And* tell her what I found out about Arlene. As for you, Ms Ballis, there's nothing else about the case you can do right now. So why don't you go back to taking care of your own business? I'll keep you informed of what's going on."

"All right. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," Then I hung up and called Trudy and told her everything I had just found out about Arlene and what I was doing now and about the phone conversation I had just had with Susan.

"Hey, that's great," Trudy said after I had finished. "Now we know for sure that someone *is* impersonating Belinda."

"Yeah, we do. What about you? Have *you* found out anything?"

"I don't know. I followed Rositer, and then I saw him go out to a shack out in a wooded area outside town, and then I pulled off the road so I could see what he was doing through my binoculars, but I wasn't able to see much. Most of the shack is covered up by trees. And then I saw some people drive away from the shack. Then I pulled off of the road and drove down the road some more, and then I turned around drove down the street and passed the shack and glanced at it. But I didn't see anything else. Then I kept driving away the shack. I couldn't stop and stake out the shack. If I would, and if Roster and someone else with him saw me do it, they'd probably keep me from doing it. And I didn't want this to happen."

"I understand. Where are you now?"

"Going back to town."

"All right. And when you get back to town, rest up. I think I'll drive out to that shack and take a look at it. That shack might tell us something."

"Yeah, there is that possibility."

"Yeah, there is. And I think that what we should do whenever we're not doing anything else is drive by that shack and glance at it."

"O.K.,"

"Where outside town is this shack?"

Trudy told me and I wrote it down on the pad on my desk, and then Trudy gave me directions on how to go out to the shack, and I wrote them on the pad on my desk. After that we hung up. Then I collected the radios to the bugs I had planted in all of the places I wanted to listen in on and left the house and closed and locked the door and got into my car and started it up and drove out to the shack.

When I got here, I drove by the shack and glanced at it. That shack got my interest. Possibly because the real Belinda was inside it. Being held there against her will. I saw the same thing about the shack that Trudy had seen. Then I continued driving down the road. But I didn't pull over and onto the shoulder and stop so I could take a look at the

shack again. Somehow I was going to have to find out if the real Belinda *were* inside the shack. I don't know about rescuing her at that time, though. I may not be able to rescue her at that time. I'd have to come back and rescue her at another time when I'd be ready to rescue her. Not only that, I still had to find out why someone was impersonating Belinda *and* find out if the real Belinda were still alive, or if she were dead right now. And after I find these things out--if I find these things out--*and*, if I'm lucky, I'll rescue Belinda.

As I drove back in the same direction I had come from, I thought about how I could find out if the real Belinda *were* being held there at that shack or not. But that was all I could do as well as what I was going to do. No sense telling anyone she was there at the shack and being held there against her will until I knew that she *was* there at the shack and being held there against her will.

I was getting hungry now so I stopped somewhere and had a cheeseburger and fries and washed it down with coffee. I also continued thinking about how I could find out if the real Belinda were inside that shack and being held there against her will. Then I left a nice tip on the counter, and then I paid my check, and then I left the restaurant and got into my car and started it up and left.

I went back home, and when I got here, I went into my room and got my backpack out of the closet and put into it things I may need to use to help me find out if the real Belinda were inside that shack and being held there against her will. Then I looked at my watch. Ten minutes to one. Then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later today, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas and got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and turned the alarm clock off. Then I looked at the clock. It told me it was the time I wanted to get up at. Then I went into the bathroom and threw cold water in my face. I felt better now. Then I went into the kitchen and heated up some left over Sloppy Joe's, and then I had Sloppy Joe's for dinner, and then I went back into my room and got dressed, and then I collected my backpack and left the house and closed and locked the door behind me.

It was dark out now. The sky was black and blue, and there was a sprinkling of stars in the sky, and the moon was big and round and white and glowing.

Then I got into my car and started it up, and then I drove away from my place so I could go over to the shack and find out if the real Belinda were inside that shack and find out if she were being held there against her will.

CHAPTER VIII

I reached the shack, and then I drove passed it, and then I pulled off of the road and drove into the wooded area and parked my car here. After that, I took my binoculars out of my backpack and looked through them at the shack. The shack was well inside the wooded area. It was an old, abandoned house. I saw some light inside the house. Then I put my binoculars back into my backpack, and then I took my leather gloves out of the backpack and put them on, and then I zipped up put my backpack and put it on, and then I got out of the car and locked it, and then I ran through the wooded area to the shack so I could sneak up to the shack and see what was going on inside the shack.

When I got here to the shack, I got up against one of the walls of the shack and peeked into the window. Then I saw some men inside the shack. There were two of them. One of them was sitting on a couch, and the other one was sitting in a dark green recliner chair. Then I recognized the man who was sitting in the chair. It was Rositer. I recognized him from the information I had gotten on him. He was tall, lean, had light brown hair, green eyes, a rough, stern face, and he was wearing a long sleeve black turtleneck sweater and black pants and black leather shoes. I didn't recognize the other man who was sitting on the couch. I had never seen him before. He had sort of a pushed in look on his face and a stout build, and he was wearing a blue waistlength coat and a light green shirt and light brown pants and black leather shoes. Then, I stopped suddenly and looked.

She was sitting on the couch next to the man with the pushed in looking face-- Belinda. And that had to be the real Belinda who was sitting on the couch next to the man with the pushed in looking face. It couldn't be her double. Her double was impersonating Belinda and living at Belinda's place and doing Belinda's job and pretending to be Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And this Belinda--the real Belinda--was wearing a dark blue T-shirt and light green jeans and white tennis shoes.

I looked around the rest of the shack, but it looked like the only people who were here at the shack were the real Belinda and Rositer and the man with the pushed in looking face. I didn't see anyone else here at the shack. And I saw Rositer's car and a tan Volkswagen parked outside the shack. I got into Rositer's car and searched it, but I didn't find anything inside it. Then I got out of Rositer's car and into the Volkswagen and searched it. The registration of the Volkswagen told me the car belonged to Sam Winston. There wasn't anything else inside the car. Then I got out of the car and ran back to *my* car. It was time now for me to leave. I had done what I had come out here to the shack to do.

I was driving away from the shack now. Without speeding so I won't alert the police or arouse suspicion. Going in the same direction I had come from. I didn't want to turn around and drive back to where I had come from. The people inside the shack could have seen me drive by the shack that first time, and if they see me drive by the shack a second time, going in the opposite direction, they might wonder about it; they might even look into it; they might even do something about it, something that could or would endanger the real Belinda's life. Which I didn't want.

I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Susan on *her* cell phone.

"Hello," she said. She sounded like she had been asleep.

"Hello. Ms Ballis? This is Frank Hurley."

"Yes, Mr. Hurley,"

I'm sorry to wake you up, but it's important. I found the real Belinda."

"You have?!"

"Yes, I have." Then I told Susan where the real Belinda was and who she was with and why I had gone out to the shack. "I need to see you as soon as possible so we can talk about what to do next," I told her after I had finished. "I'm going to have to tell Lieutenant Pritchard and Trudy I found her and I'd like to talk to them about what to do next as soon as possible, too."

"All right,"

"Can I get you to meet me at my place as soon as you can?"

"Yeah, I'll be there."

"Good. I'll call Lieutenant Pritchard and Trudy and tell them I found the real Belinda and where she is and that I'd like to see them about what to do next as well as see you about what to do next."

"Of course,"

"The reason why I'd like to have Lieutenant Pritchard be with you and Trudy and me when we talk about what to do next is because after we had our discussion in my office about the possibility of someone impersonating Belinda, I saw Lieutenant Pritchard and told him you told me about the possibility of someone impersonating Belinda and that I was going to look into the possibility, and then he asked me if I'll let him know if I find something solid, and I promised I would. And it does look like I found something solid."

"I understand,"

"Good. Whatever you do, don't tell anyone I found Belinda and where she is now. I'll explain why you shouldn't tell anyone I found her and where she is now when we meet."

"All right," Then I hung up and called Craig at his place and told him about the phone conversation I had just had with Susan, and then I asked *him* to meet me at my place as soon as *he* can. He said he'll be there.

"Good," I said. "Could I also get you to tell your men to drive by that shack from time to time and glance at it to see what's going on over there? Don't have your men drive by the shack and find out what's going on over there frequently or stake out the place. There's no telling what those people at the shack will do, and it might endanger the real Belinda Cranston's life."

"I understand,"

"Good," Then I hung up and called Trudy at *her* place and told her about the phone conversation I had had with Susan, and about the phone conversation I had had with Craig. After that, I asked Trudy if she could be at my place as soon as she can for the emergency meeting, and then she said she'll be there. After that, we hung up.

Susan, Craig, Trudy, and I were here at my place now. I had made a pot of coffee for all of us after I had come back here to my place and after I had had my phone conversations with Trudy and Susan and Craig. Now Susan, Trudy, Craig, and I were here inside my den and sitting around my desk and sipping coffee and I was running a check on Sam Winston. Then I printed out the information on Winston and shut the computer and the printer off, and then Trudy and Susan and Craig and I read the information on Winston.

Winston was an operative Bellingham Security Agency, too. After we had read the information on Winston, I told Craig and Susan and Trudy what I had discovered out there at the shack.

"So it looks like someone *is* impersonating Belinda Cranston," Craig said after I had finished.

"Yeah," I confirmed. Then I told Craig what Susan and Trudy and I had been looking into and what we had discovered up to now.

"Well, that's very interesting," Craig said after I had finished.

"Yes, it is," I said. "And now we know the real Belinda Cranston is alive, and we know who's impersonating her, but we still don't know why someone wants her impersonated. I don't think that Arlene Donnelly is the one who's running the show. I don't think she's the one who wants something from Peter Jordan. Arlene is one of the agents who's in on the plot to impersonate Belinda Cranston. Whoever it is that wants something from Peter is going through a lot of trouble to get what he or she or they want from Peter, something that requires this impersonation plot."

"But what could it be that this someone wants from Peter?" Trudy asked.

"I don't know," I answered. "But whatever it is, it's important,"

"Yeah," Craig confirmed. "But it'd take time to find out who wants this something from Peter, and it would take time to find out what it is that this someone wants from Peter."

"But we have time to find out who wants this something from Peter, and find out what it is that this someone wants from Peter," I pointed out. "Although we should come up with a plan to find out who wants this something from Peter and find out what it is that this someone wants from Peter as soon as we can and execute this plan as soon as we can."

"Of course," Craig agreed.

"Yeah," Trudy agreed, too.

Then I spoke to Susan: "Ms Ballis, the reason why I asked you not to tell anyone that I found real Belinda and where she is now is because if Arlene and Rositer and the other people who are in the impersonation plot know that I found Belinda, they'll cancel the plot and disappear, and to make matters worse, they'll kill Belinda or take her with them and hold her as a hostage."

"I understand. And I won't tell anyone you found Belinda and where she is now."

"Good," Then I spoke to Craig: "Craig, we'll need to continue putting that shack under surveillance. We've got to keep that shack in our sights. And we should continue putting that shack under surveillance the way I suggested: by driving by the shack from time to time and glance at it to see what happens."

"I'll take care of it," Craig promised.

"Great," Then I looked at my watch and spoke to Susan and Trudy again: "It's getting late, and I'm getting tired. Supposing we meet back here at my place at five o'clock tomorrow night, and then we can have dinner and discuss our plan of action?"

Susan and Trudy and Craig agreed to that.

"Great," I then said. "See ya tomorrow night."

Then Trudy and Susan and Craig left, and then *I* unlocked the filing cabinet and took the file on the Cranston occurrence out of the cabinet and put the information I got on Winston into the file, and then I put the file back into the cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet and turned off the light and left the den and went into the kitchen and unplugged the coffeemaker and turned off the light and left the kitchen, and then I went back into the living room and turned off the light, and then I went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I put my

gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

I was up early the next day. I had gotten up at the time I had wanted to get up at. Then I had made coffee and had made and had eaten a delicious sausage and scrambled egg breakfast and had washed all of it down with coffee and orange juice. Now I was here inside the living room and watching TV and sipping more coffee and listening in on Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone. There wasn't anything else I could do until I attend the next meeting with Susan and Trudy and Craig tonight.

I continued listening in on Rositer's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone and watching TV until I got sleepy. Then I turned the TV off and went into my room and set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later and went to sleep, leaving the door wide open so I can hear anything being said or done on Rositer's cell phone or on Belinda's cell phone or on Arlene's cell phone.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and looked at the clock. The clock told me it was the time I wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and into my bathrobe and left the bedroom and went into the kitchen and made a pot of coffee and went into the living room and continued listening in Rositer's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone and continued watching TV while the coffee was cooking.

I was sipping coffee now. And I continued listening in on Rositer's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone and watching TV until it was time for me to get ready for the meeting I was going to have with Susan and Trudy and Craig tonight, too. Then I got out of my recliner chair so I could get ready for the meeting.

CHAPTER IX

Craig and Trudy and Susan and I were here at my place now. Sitting around the table and having dinner; steak and fries and washing this down with red wine, and for dessert we had honey lemon pudding. And washed it down with more red wine.

While we had dinner and dessert, we didn't talk about the Cranston occurrence. Instead, we talked about other things.

We were here inside the living room now. We had finished eating our dinner. Now we were having more red wine, and Craig spoke to Susan and Trudy and me: "We're putting the shack under surveillance, and we're putting it under surveillance the way you suggested, Frank. As for what's been going on out there, some people went over to the shack, and then Rositer and Winston left the shack. So it looks like those people who went over to the shack must have relieved Rositer and Winston on watching Belinda Cranston, and then Rositer and Winston must have gone home and rested up.

"Yeah," I agreed. "And this tells us two more things; one: there are more people who must be in this impersonation plot, and two: all of these people are keeping Belinda alive until they do what they want to do that has to do with Peter Jordan. They have to keep Belinda alive until they do what they want to do that has to do with Peter. She's no good to them dead."

"Of course. We're also putting Rositer and Winston under surveillance. But so far, they haven't said or done anything else that has to do with the impersonation plot. But we're still keeping them under surveillance."

"Good."

Craig, Trudy, Susan, and I were listening in on Rositer's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and discussing our plan of action now.

All of us decided on what plan of action to use. Then we talked about how we could execute this plan and what equipment we could use to help us execute the plan. Then we decided on where and when to get ready to carry out the plan. After that, Craig, Susan, and Trudy left, and I collected the dishes and went into the kitchen and washed them. Then I turned off the light and left the kitchen, and then I went into the living room and turned off the light and left the living room, and then I went into *my* room and turned on the light, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep, leaving the door of my room open so I could continue listening in Rositer's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and Belinda's cell phone.

The next day, Trudy, Craig, Craig's men, and I were here at police headquarters, getting ready to carry out our plan of action. Susan was at work, pretending she knew nothing about what was going on. She was supposed to. After Craig and his men and Trudy and I had gotten ready to carry out our plan of action, we went home and rested up. We were going to need to do that.

The next night, Craig, his men, Trudy, and I were driving out to the shack to carry out our plan of action.

We drove by the shack and glanced at what was going on there. Then we pulled off of the road and drove into the wooded area and parked our cars here. Then we looked at the shack through our binoculars. Then we got out of our cars and ran over to the shack. We were all wearing black wool caps and black turtleneck sweaters and black leather

gloves and black pants and black tennis shoes, and we also had black backpacks on our backs.

When we reached the shack, we got up against the walls and peeked into the window. We saw Belinda and Rositer and Winston inside the living room and watching TV. Rositer was sitting in the recliner chair again, and Winston and Belinda were sitting on the couch again. Then we snuck around to the side of the shack and snuck into the shack and into the hall, and when we reached the entrance to the living room, we got on either side of the entrance and peeked into it. Belinda and Rositer and Winston were still watching TV. Then, one of Craig's men took his gun out of his shoulder holster and took careful aim into the living room. Then he pulled the trigger, and then the pellet shot out of the gun and hit the ceiling. Then Craig, his men, Trudy, and I watched. Then we heard the pellet break open, and then we saw the gas leaking out of the pellet. Then the gas knocked Belinda and Winston and Rositer out. Now Belinda and Rositer and Winston were out cold. And they were going to be out cold for hours. More than enough time for Craig, his men, Trudy, and I to do what we had come here to the shack to do. Then two of Craig's men rushed into the living room and picked Belinda up and took her into the bathroom, and Trudy and Regina Walker, another one of Craig's men, went into the bathroom with the two men.

Here inside the bathroom, the two men left the bathroom and rejoined Craig and the rest of his men, and then Trudy took Belinda's clothes off, and Regina took *her* clothes and backpack off, and then Regina put Belinda's clothes on, and then she helped Trudy put Regina's clothes on Belinda. Regina was the same height as Belinda, and had the same build as Belinda, and she also had long platinum blonde hair, blue eyes, a creamy pallor complexion, and even features. Then Regina took her mask of Belinda out of her backpack and put it on, and then she zipped up her backpack and put it on Belinda, and Trudy helped her do it, and then Trudy and Regina picked Belinda up and took her out of the bathroom, and then one of Craig's men took over Regina's helping Trudy taking Belinda out of the bathroom, and then that man and Trudy took Belinda out of the shack and back to one of the cars and put Belinda in it, and then Trudy got into the car and stayed with Belinda while the man who had helped Trudy take Belinda out here to the car went back into the shack and rejoined Craig and the rest of his men and me in searching the shack. We were going to need to do that before we leave the shack.

But we didn't find anything here inside the shack.

After we had finished searching the shack, everyone but Regina left the shack and went back to our cars and got into them and started them and left the shack, going back in the same direction we had come from, and without speeding so we won't arouse suspicion, *and* so we won't alert the police.

Back here inside the shack, Regina went into the living room and sat down on the same exact spot on the couch that Belinda had been sitting on and watched TV and watched Rositer and Winston to see when they were going to come to, and then she was going to pretend come to when she sees Rositer and Winston come to. Then she was going to do what Craig had told her to do that had to do with her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action.

As Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and I drove away from the shack, I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Susan and told her we had just finished searching the shack and Regina had switch places with Belinda so she could do what Craig had told her to do that had to do with her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action.

The real Belinda woke up, feeling somewhat drugged. Then she looked all around her. Then, she stopped suddenly. Then she sat up and looked around her some more. And then she wondered where she was and why she was here.

She was in a jail cell.

Then Trudy and Susan and Craig and I came into the room and walked over to Belinda's cell.

"Ms Cranston? I'm Lieutenant Pritchard of the Detective Unit," Craig introduced himself to the real Belinda and showed her his badge. "How are you feeling?" he then asked her. "The drug we knocked you and those men out with was effective, but mild. You shouldn't have any side effects."

"I feel a little bit drugged," Belinda admitted. "But I think I'll be all right."

"Good,"

"Where am I? Why am I here?"

"You're here at police headquarters, and at the moment, you're under police protection." Then Craig unlocked the door to Belinda's cell and let her out. She walked out. "We'll tell you why you're under police protection in my office."

"Hello, Belinda," Susan said, smiling.

"Susan," Belinda said, smiling. And then she and Susan hugged each other.

Then Susan and Belinda and Craig and Trudy and I went to Craig's office. After I had called Susan and told her that Craig and his men and Trudy and I had gone out to the shack and had searched it and that Regina had switched places with Belinda so she could impersonate Belinda and help Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action, Susan had told me she was going to come over here to police headquarters and see Belinda. When Craig and Susan and Trudy and I had worked out our plan of action having to do with what we had done out at the shack, one of the things we had agreed to, and had done, was take the real Belinda to police headquarters and put her in jail and leave her there until she comes to and then we can talk to her about what we were doing.

We were here inside Craig's office now. Sitting around his desk and Trudy and I introduced ourselves to Belinda. Then Craig told Belinda why he and his men and Trudy and I had rendered her and Rositer and Winston unconscious and had Regina switch places with her to impersonate her.

"I see," Belinda said after Craig had finished. "But why did you do this?"

"Because someone else is impersonating you as well as Regina Walker is impersonating you," Susan told Belinda. "Regina Walker is one of Lieutenant Pritchard's men, and she's out there at that shack and impersonating you right now."

"What?!" Belinda looked and sounded surprised.

"You don't know that someone else is impersonating you as well as Regina Walker is impersonating you and why?" I asked Belinda.

"No, I don't. All I know is that before I went to bed one night, someone came up from behind me and knocked me out by putting a handkerchief over my mouth. That handkerchief must have had chloroform in it. And then I woke up in that shack. And there were some men inside the shack. I asked them why I was at the shack, but they didn't tell me. Instead they told me to do what I'm told and let it go at that."

"Smart. They didn't want to tell you why you were at the shack, and they're probably the same people who smuggled you out of your place and into the shack. And they probably drugged you before they smuggled you out of your place and into the shack, too. And Arlene may have been there at your place and made the switch with you

when those people drugged you and smuggled you out of your place and into the shack, also." Then I told Belinda what it was that Trudy and Susan and I had discovered in the impersonation plot so far.

Belinda looked shocked after I had finished.

"And I hired Mr. Hurley to look into the possibility of someone impersonating you," Susan told Belinda. "Mr. Hurley is a private investigator, and Ms Warner is an operative of his that he hired to help him look into this possibility of someone impersonating you."

"That's right," I told Belinda.

"That's right," Trudy told Belinda.

"Well, I hope the rest of your plan works." Belinda hoped.

"We hope so, too," I told Belinda.

"I'm afraid you're going to have to stay out of sight and be under police protection so that the people who are in on the impersonation plot don't see you," Craig pointed out to Belinda. "If they *do* see you, they'll know something's wrong. And if they *do* find out something's wrong, they'll wonder about it; they might even look into it and keep us from doing what we're doing; or worse: they may call off the impersonation plot and scatter and disappear; they might even take Regina with them and hold her as a hostage, or they may kill her, although they don't know that she's impersonating you. And then we'll never find out the rest of what we need to know about this impersonation plot."

"I see," Belinda said.

"And no one else must see you while we continue looking into this impersonation plot; not even your friends. Because if they do, and they tell the people who are in the impersonation plot, without knowing they did, the people who are in the impersonation plot will look for you, and if they find you, they'll know that there's something wrong, and then they'll wonder about it; and they might even look into it and keep us from doing what we're doing; or worse: they may call off the impersonation plot and scatter and disappear; and they might even take Regina with them and hold her as a hostage, or they may kill her, although they don't know that she's impersonating you. And then we'll never find out the rest of what we need to know about the impersonation plot."

"I understand. Would it be possible for me to see this Arlene Donnelly without her seeing me? I want to take a look at this someone else who's impersonating me as well as Regina Walker's impersonating me."

"I think we can do that. I don't think there'll be any harm in doing that."

Belinda smiled.

"Have you eaten, Ms Cranston?"

"No, I haven't,"

"Well, then let's go get something to eat. Then you can go see this someone else who's impersonating you as Regina Walker's impersonating you without her seeing you."

Then Craig and Belinda and Trudy and Susan and I left Craig's office so all of us could go eat.

We and one of Craig's men were walking out of the police station now. Craig and Trudy and Susan and Belinda and I had eaten, and then Belinda had put on her disguise of someone else that had been made for her. Now Belinda and Susan went out into the parking lot of the police station and got into Susan's car and drove out of the parking lot and over to Susan's place. Belinda was going to stay at Susan's place. And Craig's man, who was walking out of the police station with Susan and Belinda and Trudy and Craig

and me, walked into the parking lot of the police station and got into *his* car and drove out of the police department's parking lot and drove behind Susan and Belinda so he could put Belinda under protective surveillance. Craig had told him to put Belinda under protective surveillance. And Trudy walked out into the parking lot and got in her dark charcoal gray Altima and drove out of the parking lot and went home so she could rest up, and Craig went out into the parking lot and got into his blue gray Honda Accord and drove out of the parking lot and went home so *he* could rest up, and *I* went out into the parking lot and got into *my* car and drove out of the parking lot and went home so *I* could rest up.

A few hours later, back here at the shack, Regina saw Winston and Rositer come to. Then she pretended to come to with them. Then Rositer and Winston said to each other that they and Belinda must have fallen asleep. Regina was pleased. Rositer and Winston bought the act. They thought that Regina was Belinda. Now Regina could do the rest of what Craig had told her to do to help Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action.

The next day, Belinda, in disguise as the someone else, and Trudy, and Susan, and I were here at Consolidated Industries. We had managed to pick up Arlene's trail and put her under surveillance so that Belinda could take a look at the woman who was impersonating her. Now Susan, Belinda, Trudy, and I were parked a few yards away from Consolidated Industries and watching the plant to see Arlene come out and get into Belinda's car and leave work. It was quitting time now.

Then Trudy and Susan and Belinda and I saw the people come out of Consolidated Industries and go into the parking lot so they could get into their cars and leave work. Then I got out my binoculars and looked at the people. Then I saw Arlene. She was wearing make up and a long sleeve black blouse and a cream white skirt with black flowers and shiny black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her purse, which was resting on her right shoulder. Then I gave the binoculars to Belinda and told her what Arlene was wearing and where inside the parking lot she was. Then Belinda looked through the binoculars and for Arlene. She found her. Arlene was talking to some of Belinda's friends as they were going to their cars.

"So that's the someone else who's impersonating me as well as Regina Walker is impersonating me," Belinda said angrily.

"Yeah," I confirmed. "And I understand how you feel. But there is Regina. You must like what *she's* doing."

"Yes, I do," Belinda sounded please. "Although I can't see what *she's* doing."

"I know. Well. We'd better get out of here. You did what you wanted to do, but we can't let anyone see what *we're* doing."

"No. Of course not."

Then Trudy started up her car, and then she and Belinda and Susan and I pulled away from the curb so we could leave, and another one of Craig's men, who was here at Consolidated Industries, also, started up *his* car and pulled away from the curb so *he* could leave and continue putting Belinda under protective surveillance. He had relieved the other man of putting Belinda under protective surveillance. The other man had gotten tired. Now the man who had relived the other man drove behind Belinda and Susan and Trudy and me as we left Consolidated Industries.

CHAPTER X

A few hours later, out here at the shack, Regina, Rositer, and Winston were here inside the living room. After a while, two more men had come over here to the shack and had relieved Rositer and Winston on watching Belinda, and then Rositer and Winston had gone home and had rested up, and after they had rested up, they had come back here to the shack and had relieved the two men who had relieved them. Then *they* had gone home and had rested up. Now Regina and Rositer and Winston were watching TV. Then, Regina glanced out the window. Then she noticed that it was dark out now. The perfect time for her to do what she had to do next in her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action--and then she did it: she got off of the couch and started to walk away from it.

"Where are you going?" Rositer asked her.

"To the bathroom," Regina answered timidly, playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast. "I gotta go awful bad."

"All right,"

Then Regina walked out of the living room and into the hall, and then she noticed that no one else was here inside the hall.

Out here in the living room, Rositer and Winston continued watching TV. Then they heard something.

"What was that?!" Winston asked.

"I don't know," Rositer answered.

Then Rositer and Winston ran out of the living room and into the hall, and then they noticed that the bathroom door was open and that a door to another room was open. Then they ran into the bathroom to take a look here. Belinda wasn't here. Then they rushed out of the bathroom and into the other room in which the door of this room was open. And then they stopped suddenly and looked around.

The window inside *this* room had been opened. Then Rositer and Winston went through the other door inside this room and out into the back of the shack. Then they stopped and looked all around them.

Belinda was nowhere around.

"She's escape!" Winston said.

"Yeah!" Rositer agreed. "And now we've got to find her. But first we're going to have to call the others and let them know she's escaped. They'll need to know that. There's no telling how long it'll be before we find her. But we've got to find her. But I don't think she got into one of our cars and escaped. She doesn't have the keys to our cars. *We've* got them. And we've been watching her every second. Except for the time she went to the bathroom. So there was no way she could have stolen one of our cars and escaped. So, she must have run off into the wooded area. It'd be the only logical place for her to escape in."

"Yeah,"

"I'll call Hazel and Arlene and tell them what happened, and you call the others and tell *them* what happened, and also tell them to help us find the Cranston woman."

"Right,"

Then Rositer and Winston ran back into the shack so they could call all of these people and tell them that Belinda had just escaped.

I was here at my place now. After Belinda had seen the someone else who was impersonating her as well as Regina was impersonating her, and without Arlene seeing

Belinda, she and Trudy and Susan and I had gone somewhere and had had dinner, and then Trudy had dropped Belinda and Susan off at Susan's place, and Trudy had dropped *me* off at *my* place, and then Trudy had gone home herself. Now I was here inside the living room and sitting in my favorite recliner chair and watching TV and sipping Coke and listening in on Belinda's cell phone and Arlene's cell phone and Rositer's cell phone. Then, I heard Rositer dialing a phone number on *his* cell phone. Quickly I turned down the volume on the TV with the remote control and turned on the tape recorder and listened. I didn't recognize the phone number that Rositer was dialing. Although I wrote it down on the pad on my coffee table.

"Hello?" a woman said.

"Hello. Hazel?"

"Yes, this is Hazel."

"Hazel, this is Eli. The Cranston woman has escaped."

"She what?!"

"That's right. She escaped. She said she had to go to the bathroom, and then she went to the bathroom, and then Sam and I heard this noise. We went to investigate, and then we noticed that the Cranston woman ran out of the bathroom and into another room and went out the window. I thought you might want to know. We'll find her, but it's hard to say when we'll find her. But it looks like she's on foot. She didn't take my car or Sam's. Sam and I are also going to call the others and tell them that the Cranston woman has escaped and have them help us find her."

"Good. And when you call Arlene and tell *her* that the Cranston woman has escaped and you're going to find her, also tell her to continue impersonating the Cranston woman. We must go ahead as planned. And another reason why we must find the Cranston woman is because if she goes to the police and tells them she's been kidnapped, the police will look into the kidnapping, and then they'll find out what we're doing and stop us from doing it. So find the Cranston woman and get her back to the shack."

"We'll do that,"

"Good. And after you've done it, be sure to let Arlene and me know you've done it."

"We will,"

"Good. And *I'll* continue doing what *I'm* doing so I won't arouse suspicion. All right?"

"All right,"

"Good. Anything else, Eli?"

"No, that's it."

"Good luck on finding the Cranston woman."

"Thanks," Then Rositer hung up.

So did Hazel.

Then I heard Rositer call Arlene, and then Arlene answered *her* cell phone, and then Rositer told Arlene everything that he and this Hazel had just talked about on the phone. After that, they hung up. Then I called Craig and Trudy and Susan and told them that Regina had just executed the next phase in her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action, and then we hung up, and then I tore off of the pad on my coffee table the information I had written down on this Hazel, and then I ran out of the living room and into the den and sat down behind my desk and got out my criss cross directory to find out who this Hazel was. And did. Hazel's last name was Cambridge, and she lived here in Bellingham. Then I got on the computer and

ran a check on Hazel and printed out the information on her, and then I turned off the computer and the printer and read the information I had just gotten on Hazel.

She was the assistant head of Consolidated Industries.

Back here at the shack, Winston spoke to Rositer: "I told the others that the Cranston woman has escaped and that we're going to find her, and they'll help us find her."

"Great," Then Rositer told Winston about the phone conversation he had just had with Hazel and Arlene. "What we can do to help out on finding the Cranston woman is you go check the roads," Rositer said after he had finished. "I don't think she went in that direction, but, just in case. *I'll* check the wooded area. The wooded area would be the most likely place for her to escape in. It'd help her make it difficult for us to find her."

"Yeah. And she has a head start on us."

"I know. We'll, let's get started."

"Yeah."

Then Rositer and Winston left the shack so they could split up and find Belinda.

Belinda, Trudy, Susan, and Craig were here at my place now. After I had called them and told them that Regina had executed the next phase in her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action, they had come over here to my place to hear the recording of the phone conversation that Rositer had just had with Hazel, and to hear the recording of the phone conversation he had just had with Arlene after Regina had done what she had done in her helping Craig and the rest of his men and Trudy and Susan and me carry out our plan of action. Now Belinda and Susan and Trudy and Craig and I were here inside the living room and sitting around the coffee table and listening to the recording of the phone conversation that Rositer had had with Hazel, and listening to the recording of the phone conversation Rositer had had with Arlene.

After we had heard the recordings, I turned the tape recorder off and told Belinda and Susan and Trudy and Craig I had run a check on Hazel and showed them the information I had gotten on her.

"I already know who Hazel is," Belinda said. "She's the assistant head of Consolidated Industries."

"Yeah," Susan confirmed.

I nodded. "Well, that's interesting," I said. "She's the assistant head of Consolidated Industries, and she's in on the impersonation plot as well as Arlene Donnelly and Rositer and Winston and those other people are, and this impersonation plot has to do with Peter Jordan."

"Yeah," Trudy agreed. "And if she's in on the impersonation plot with the rest of them, then that would mean that she's helping them out on the plot . . . Or maybe she's the one who wants something from Peter."

"Yeah," I agreed. "And if she's the one who wants something from Peter, then that would mean that she's the one who came up with this plot to impersonate Belinda."

"Yeah," Craig agreed.

"Yeah. And this something that she wants from Peter must be something big or important, or both, something that she's going through a lot of trouble to get--assuming that she's the one who wants something from Peter."

"Yeah. But what could she want from Peter?"

"I don't know. But we've gotta find out and stop from her from getting her hands on it. We also have to assume that she's the one who wants something from Peter."

"Yeah,"

Susan and Trudy and Belinda agreed on that, too.

Then Craig and Trudy and Susan and Belinda and I talked about how we could find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter. We didn't talk about how we could stop Hazel from getting her hands on whatever it was that she wanted from Peter. We couldn't talk about that right now. First we had to assume that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter and find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, and then, depending upon what we find out, if we find out that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter, and if we find out what it was that she wanted from Peter, we work out and execute our plan to stop Hazel from getting her hands on whatever it was that she wanted from Peter.

Regina was here inside the wooded area. After she had run out of the shack, she had run into the wooded area and had climbed up a tree and had hid inside the tree and watched the shack to see when Rositer and Winston were going to come out of the shack and see what they were going to do, and saw them come out of the shack and stop and look around and talk and heard what they had talked about and go back into the shack. Then she had gotten down from the tree and had started running through the wooded area. Now she was running through the wooded area and away from the shack, getting further and further away from the shack with each passing second.

Then she stopped and looked.

She saw Rositer and some other people walking through the wooded area. And they had pistols in their hands. Then she looked around to see where she could run to so she could get away from them.

There was nowhere else to run to. More people were here inside the wooded area and walking towards Regina. And *they* had guns in their hands, too.

"Those are tranquilizing pistols you see in our hands, Ms Cranston," Rositer pointed out to Regina, still thinking that Regina was Belinda. "Now you can have us shoot you with one of these tranquilizing guns, and then we'll carry you back to the shack, or you can walk back to the shack of your own accord. It's your choice."

"I'll walk back to the shack," Regina said timidly, still playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast.

"Good choice,"

Then Regina and Rositer and the rest of the people walked back to the shack, and Rositer took his cell phone out of his pocket and called Winston and Arlene and Hazel and told them that he and the others had just found Belinda and that they were taking her back to the shack right now.

CHAPTER XI

Back here at my place, Susan, Belinda, Trudy, Craig, and I heard Rositer telling Winston and Arlene and Hazel that he and the others had found Belinda and that they were taking her back to the shack right now.

"Good," Craig said. "Regina just carried out the next phase of our plan."

"So far so good," I said.

"Yeah,"

Then Craig and Belinda and Susan and Trudy and I went back to working out our plan to assume that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter, *and* find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter.

We finished working out our plan to assume that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter, *and* to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter. Now Belinda put on her disguise of the someone else, and then she and Susan and Trudy and Craig left. And I collected the information on Hazel and turned off the light and went into the den and turned on the light and took the file on the Cranston occurrence out of the filing cabinet and put the information on Hazel into the file on the Cranston occurrence, and then I put the file back into the filing cabinet, and then I closed and locked the filing cabinet, and then I turned off the light and left the den and went into my room and turned the light on. Then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned the light off and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, Susan was at work. That was all she could do right now. And Belinda was out and about and in disguise as the someone else and shopping and went to a movie. That was all *she* could do right now. And she was still under protective surveillance by the police, too. And Craig and his men were putting Hazel under twenty four hour surveillance. And Trudy and I snuck into Hazel's home and searched and bugged it and tapped her landline phone while Hazel was at work.

It was seven twenty-six pm now. Craig, Trudy, Susan, Belinda, and I were here at my place now. We had agreed to meet here at my place to have dinner and to compare notes after we had done what we had to do in our plan to assume that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter, *and*, to find out what she wanted from Peter. Then we had had dinner. Now we were here inside the living room and sitting around the coffee table and sipping coffee.

"We put Hazel Cambridge under twenty four hour surveillance," Craig told Trudy and Susan and Belinda and me. "but she hasn't said or done anything to indicate that she's the one who wants something from Peter, and what it is she wants from Peter, and she hasn't even said or done anything to indicate what's she doing in the impersonation plot."

"Which means that she's not going to say or do anything to indicate that she's the one who wants something from Peter, and what it is she wants from Peter, and what's she's doing in the impersonation plot, until Peter gets back from his vacation in Europe," I said. "She'll just keep on doing what she's doing now until Peter does get back from his vacation in Europe, and then she'll do what she's going to do in her plan to get what she wants from Peter. And as for her not saying or doing something to indicate what she's doing in the impersonation plot, she can't say or do something to indicate what she's

doing in this impersonation plot. If she does, she'll arouse suspicion; maybe even expose herself and the others who are in on the plot; and they might even get arrested for attempting to carry out the plot, too."

"Yeah. And the only places she's been going to are home and work and restaurants and stores and other people's places."

"Yeah. And those places she went to may or may not have to do with the impersonation plot."

"Of course,"

"And Frank and I searched Hazel's house and bugged it and tapped her landline phone," Trudy told Craig and Susan and Belinda. "But we didn't find anything inside her place."

"Which means that there's evidence of the impersonation plot," I said "but it's somewhere else, or there's no evidence of the impersonation plot at all; and there's something else I think I figured out: Arlene is supposed to do something else in her role as Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger that has to do with what Hazel wants from Peter: when Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe, Arlene does something with or to Peter that has to do with whatever it is that Hazel wants from Peter. Then Hazel gets what she wants from Peter."

Susan, Belinda, and Craig wondered about this. But Trudy didn't. I had told her this theory after she and I had searched Hazel's place and bugged it and tapped her landline phone and after we had left Hazel's place.

"Blackmail?" Craig guessed.

"Or something else," I guessed. "The impersonation plot is designed to help Hazel get what she wants from Peter. But I don't think that Arlene is going to do this something with or to Peter right after Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe. She'd arouse suspicion if she would; she might even expose herself and the others who are in on the impersonation plot; and then all of them might even get arrested for carrying out the plot. Instead, she's going to wait a while after Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe, then do this something to or with Peter. And then Hazel gets she wants from Peter. They've been very careful up to now about carrying out this plot to impersonate Belinda; and they're going to continue being careful about carrying out the rest of the plot. They have to be careful."

"So we still have to find out what it is that Hazel wants from Peter and keep her from getting her hands on it," Craig realized.

"That's right," I confirmed.

So far it looked like this impersonation plot was done in three phases; one: Arlene switches place with Belinda. Two: Arlene plays the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and does what Belinda does and takes care of Belinda's own business, and the rest of the people who were in on the impersonation plot take care of *their* own businesses. Three: everyone who was in on the impersonation plot do their parts in the impersonation plot when Peter gets back from his vacation in Europe--including Hazel. Even though she gets what she wants from Peter. Not only that, time was working for them in this. They would have more than enough time to do what they were going to do in the impersonation plot. And time was working for us, too. We had more than enough time to assume that Hazel was the one who wanted something from Peter, *and*, find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter. And hopefully we can find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter before Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe and arrest her and the rest of the people who were in on the

impersonation plot. And then Peter would return from Europe and find out what had happened to Hazel and everyone else who was in on the impersonation plot and what had happened while Peter had been in Europe on vacation.

But time was also working against us: since the people who were in on the impersonation plot weren't working against time, they weren't worried about getting things done at a certain time. They had already executed the first phase of their operation, and now they were executing the second phase of their operation, and then they were going to execute the third and last phase of their operation after Peter gets back from his vacation in Europe. And until Peter gets back from his vacation in Europe, there wasn't anything else in the impersonation plot that these people could do. All they had to do was wait until Peter gets back from his vacation in Europe and take care of their own businesses and stick to their cover stories. And because of this, there must not be a timetable of the impersonation plot. They must have realized that the impersonation plot would be executed in three phases. If the plot had to be executed in more than three phases, there would be a timetable.

"And I have an idea on how we can find out what it is that Hazel wants from Peter and keep her from getting it, because I think I figured out what it is that Hazel wants from Peter," I said.

"Oh?" Trudy wondered.

"Yeah. Consolidated Industries,"

"Consolidated Industries?" Susan wondered.

"Yeah. It has to be," I continued. "It has to be something big and important that she wants that requires her to have Arlene play the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. Now what she has Arlene do is play the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and then she has Arlene go out with Peter after Peter comes back from his vacation in Europe. Then, somewhere along the line, Hazel has Arlene sucker Peter into coming onto her. And then Arlene pretends that she doesn't like what Peter did, and then she keeps him from coming onto her, and then she calls the police, and then the police come and take Peter away, or she kills Peter in self defense, then calls the police, and then Hazel takes over Consolidated Industries and rewards everyone who's helped her out on the impersonation plot, and then Arlene, still playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, quits Consolidated Industries saying she feels terrible about what Peter tried to do to her, and then she moves away from Bellingham. And then the people who are in on the impersonation plot kill the real Belinda Cranston because she's a liability, a loose end. They have to. Although they didn't tell her what they did. And no one who was in on the impersonation plot will know that the real Belinda Cranston is dead. They'll think that she quit Consolidated Industries and moved away from Bellingham because of what Peter tried to do to her. And then Arlene goes back to work at Bellingham Security, pretending she doesn't know anything about the impersonation plot, and not worrying about her being the real Belinda Cranston's exact double. Because it's not unusual for someone to have a double."

"Makes sense," Trudy said.

"Yeah, it does," Craig said.

"Yeah," Susan said.

"Yeah," Belinda said.

"Yeah," I said. "And this plan could only work with a girl who *is* a Casper Milquetoast. It wouldn't work if the girl that Arlene is impersonating were a girl who

already has the reputation of a swinger. The girl who already has the reputation of a swinger didn't have the reputation of a Casper Milquetoast. Because of this, Arlene would make a mistake, and that would trip her up, and that would arouse suspicion. So that's why Hazel needed to have a Casper Milquetoast for Arlene to impersonate and pretend that Belinda Cranston turned swinger. It'd be believable for Arlene to impersonate a girl who's already a Casper Milquetoast, and then pretend that the Casper Milquetoast turned swinger. And that was where the real Belinda came in. Hazel knew that Belinda *is* a Casper Milquetoast. And so she decided to use her in her plan to get what she wants from Peter. She's perfect for what Hazel wants to do."

"Yeah," Craig agreed. "it makes sense all right."

"Yeah," Susan said.

"Yeah," Belinda said.

"Yeah," *I* said. "Now. As for how we find out what Hazel wants from Peter and keep her from getting it . . ." Then I told Craig and Trudy and Susan and Belinda what my idea was for how we could find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and how to keep her from getting it.

Belinda put on her disguise of the someone else, and then she and Susan and Trudy and Craig left my place. They and I had finished coming up with our plan to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keeping her from getting her hands on it. We had also agreed that the best way to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keep her from getting her hands on it as soon as possible was not find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keeping her from getting her hands on it as soon as possible. Instead, we take our time trying to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keep her from getting her hands on it. We don't get it done at a certain time. Now Susan and Belinda got into Susan's car and went back to Susan's place and turned in, and then Trudy got into *her* car and went back to *her* place and turned in, and Craig got *his* car and went back to *his* place and turned in, and *I* collected the dishes and took them into the kitchen and washed them. Then I turned off the light and left the kitchen and went into the living room and turned off the light, and then I went into *my* room and turned the light on, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

Starting tomorrow, Trudy, Craig, Susan, Belinda, and I were going to execute our plan to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keep her from getting her hands on it.

CHAPTER XII

It was dark out here in Bellingham. Trudy, Craig, Craig's men, and I were driving over to the shack to carry out the first phase of our plan to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, and to keep Hazel from getting her hands on it. Trudy, Craig, Craig's men, and I had gotten ready to carry out the plan, and the real Belinda was staying with Susan. There wasn't anything in the plan on how to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and to keep Hazel from getting her hands on it that the real Belinda and Susan could do. All *they* could do is take care of their own businesses, and, of course, the real Belinda continues staying out of sight until the rest of us finish carrying out the plan on how to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, and keep her from getting her hands on it.

Craig, his men, Trudy, and I had realized that *this* plan may not work. What could happen was that the people who were in on the impersonation plot could disappear, and we wouldn't know what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, *and* stop her from getting her hands on it, and they would kill Regina, unaware of the fact that Regina was impersonating Belinda, but the people who were in the impersonation plot wouldn't be able to carry out the plot. But we *were* hoping that our plan to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter and keep her from getting her hands on it was going to work.

We reached the shack and drove passed it, and then we turned around and drove off of the road and into the wooded area. After that, we parked our cars in the wooded area. Then we got out of the cars and looked at the shack through our binoculars. We were dressed in black wool caps and black sweaters and black leather gloves and black pants and black tennis shoes and our black backpacks were on our backs

We saw Regina and Winston and Rositer inside the living room of the shack. They were watching TV, and Regina and Winston were sitting on the couch, and Rositer was sitting in the recliner chair. Then we split up and circled around the back of the shack. And then we snuck into the shack. When we reached the living room, we peeked into it to see what was going on inside the living room now. Regina and Rositer and Winston were still watching TV, and Regina and Winston were still sitting on the couch, and Rositer was still sitting in the recliner chair. Then one of Craig's men aimed his tranquilizing pistol at the ceiling, and then he pulled the trigger, and then the pellet shot out of the gun and hit the ceiling, and then the pellet broke open and released the gas, and then the gas rendered Regina and Winston and Rositer unconscious. Now they were out cold. And they were going to be out cold for hours. More than enough time for us to do what we had to do. Then we went into the living room and got Regina and ran out of the shack and back to the cars and put Regina in the one of the cars, and then *we* got into all of the cars and started them up, and then we drove out of the wooded area and back in the same direction we had come from. Then Craig took smelling salts out of his pocket and waved them underneath Regina's nostrils. Then Regina came to. And then she saw Craig. And then she asked him where she was and he told her. Then Craig told her that he and the rest of his men and Trudy and I had rendered her and Rositer and Winston unconscious and left Rositer and Winston inside the shack and that we had taken her out of the shack and where we were going now. Then Craig told Regina why he and the rest of his men and Trudy and I had done this.

Trudy, Craig, his men, and I had just executed the first phase of our plan on how to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, and to keep her from getting her hands on it.

Hours later, Rositer and Winston came to. Then they noticed that the TV was still on--and then they noticed that Belinda wasn't here in the living room. Then they looked at each other. Then they ran out of the living room and through the rest of the shack to find her. But they didn't find her in the shack. Then they wondered. Then they ran out of the shack to look for her. It was getting light out now. But they didn't see Belinda outside the shack. Then they ran all around outside the shack and looked for Belinda. But they didn't find her here.

"Where could she have gone to?" Winston asked.

"I don't know," Rositer answered. "But I'd better tell Hazel about this. She's going to need to know about it."

Then Rositer and Winston ran back into the shack and into the living room, and then Rositer took his cell phone out of his pocket and called Hazel and told her that Belinda was gone.

"She's what?!" exclaimed Hazel.

"That's right," Rositer said. "She's gone. We woke after we fell asleep, and then we noticed that she was gone. Then we looked for her, but she isn't here. Which means she escaped."

"Of course. We'll, I don't think she'd get very far on foot. Unless perhaps she got a lift from someone. But we can still go ahead as planned. The only difference is that the Cranston woman will go to the police and tell them she's been kidnapped. Naturally the police'll look into it. They'll even go out to the shack and look around there. But you guys won't be at the shack. You'll make sure of that. You'll take everything with you when you evacuate the shack, and you'll make the shack look like it's never used. And then all of you will go home and go back to doing your own jobs and pretend we never had this operation."

"We'll do those things."

"And if the Cranston woman goes to her place and notices that Arlene lives there and wants to know why Arlene lives there, Arlene will tell her that *she* lives there. That her name is Belinda Cranston. And she'll the papers to prove it. And if the Cranston woman gives her any trouble, she can call the police and tell them about the argument, and then the police will come and take the Cranston woman away for disturbing the peace. People will think that she's crazy. And we won't have to get rid of her the way we had planned. And when Peter Jordan comes back from his vacation in Europe, Arlene will still be able to do her part in our operation the way we planned it."

"Of course," Rositer smiled. "I like that."

"So do I. Now. I'll tell Arlene what happened and what we're going to do. You call the others and tell *them* what happened and what we're going to do, and then you and Sam and the others evacuate the shack and take everything with you and go back home and go back to doing your own jobs and act like you don't know anything about our operation. All right?"

"All right?"

"O.K. Thanks for bringing the Cranston woman's escape to my attention, Eli."

"You're welcome, Hazel,"

Then Hazel and Rositer hung up, and then Rositer told Winston everything that he and Hazel had just talked about on the phone.

Back here at my place, and here inside my living room, I heard and recorded everything that Rositer and Hazel had been talking about on the phone, and then I heard them hang up. Then I heard and recorded Hazel phoning Arlene and telling Arlene

everything that she and Rositer had talked about on the phone. And then I heard *them* hang up. Then I turned the tape recorder off, and then I got out of my recliner chair and ran into the den and called Trudy and Craig and Regina and Susan and told them what I had just heard Hazel and Rositer talk about on the phone and that I had recorded the phone conversation, and what I had heard Hazel and Arlene talk about on the phone and that I had recorded *that* phone conversation. And then Susan told the real Belinda about the two phone conversations about "Belinda's" escape.

Trudy, Craig, Susan, the real Belinda, and Regina were here at my place now. They had told me that they had wanted to hear the recording of the phone conversation that Hazel had had with Rositer about "Belinda's" escape, *and*, hear the recording of the phone conversation that Hazel had had with Arlene about "Belinda's" escape, and then they had come over here to my place to hear the recordings right after I had talked to them. Now they and I were here inside my living room and sitting around the coffee table and listening to the recordings. This time Regina wasn't wearing her mask of Belinda. She didn't need to impersonate Belinda this time. And the real Belinda wasn't wearing her mask of the someone else now. She didn't need to impersonate the someone else right now.

After we had heard the recordings, I turned the tape recorder off.

"Well," Craig said. "Now we can arrest them."

"Yeah," I confirmed.

"But until we get the warrants for their arrests and arrest them, we'll still have to keep them under surveillance." Then Craig got out his cell phone and called the rest of his men who were still putting under surveillance all of the people who were in on the impersonation plot and told them what he and Trudy and Susan and the real Belinda and Regina and I had found out and what we were going to do next and told them to continue putting under surveillance the people who were in on the impersonation plot until we get the warrants for their arrests. And then we can arrest them.

It hadn't taken long to get the warrants. Now we were on our way to arrest them.

Hazel's office was on the top floor of Consolidated Industries. Here inside the main department of Consolidated Industries. It was big and wide and spacious and champagne white with a champagne white carpet and filled with the kind of office equipment that Hazel used in her work as assistant head of Consolidated Industries. And her big heavy cedar desk with her matching armchair and other matching armchairs before her desk were opposite the front door of her office.

Hazel herself was sitting behind her desk, penning her way through some paperwork.

Men came into her office, and one of them had a piece of paper in his hand. "Hazel Cambridge?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I'm Hazel Cambridge."

"We have a warrant for your arrest," the man said. Then he told her what he and the other men were going to arrest her for and read her her rights.

Another man got behind Hazel's desk and pulled her up and out of her chair and to her feet and handcuffed her.

Hazel wasn't very tall, plump, had auburn hair, brown eyes, a young-old oval shaped face, and she was wearing a long sleeve gray turtleneck sweater and a dark charcoal gray tight fitting skirt and flesh tone stockings and shiny dark charcoal gray high heel shoes.

Then all of the men took Hazel out of her office so they could take her downstairs and leave the building, and then take her downtown to police headquarters and book her and jail her.

Here at Belinda's place, Arlene was walking out of Belinda's room so she could leave Belinda's place and go Consolidated Industries and do Belinda's job. She was wearing a forest green coat and matching pants and an olive green blouse and shiny black high heel shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her purse, which was resting on her right shoulder.

There was a knock on the front door.

Arlene went to the door and opened it--and then she stopped suddenly and looked surprised.

Standing outside the door were Regina and two men and Belinda--the real Belinda. And this time Regina wasn't wearing her mask of Belinda, and she wasn't wearing a mask of someone else, either, and the real Belinda wasn't wearing her mask of the someone else, and she was wearing a mask of anyone else, either.

Regina had a piece of paper in her hand, she was wearing a black coat and matching pants and a gray turtleneck sweater and black tennis shoes, and Belinda was wearing her blue T-shirt and light green jeans and black tennis shoes.

"Arlene Donnelly?" Regina asked. "We have a warrant for your arrest." Then Regina told Arlene what she and the men with her were going to arrest her for and read her her rights, and then one of the two men handcuffed Arlene, and Belinda relieved Arlene of her purse. "You won't need this anymore," she told Arlene. Then Belinda looked through the purse and found Arlene's cell phone and took it out of the purse and gave it to Regina. "You can take her away now." she then told Regina.

Then Regina and the two men took Arlene away so they could take her downtown to police headquarters and book her and jail her, and Belinda walked into her house and closed the door, and then she looked through the purse.

Here at the shack, Rositer and Winston and the other people who were in on the impersonation plot were taking things out of the shack and putting them into their cars and trucks.

Craig, his men, Trudy, and I saw some of those people taking their things out of the shack and putting them into their cars and trucks.

"Police!" Craig shouted out to them. "We have warrants for your arrests." Then Craig told them what they were going to arrest them for.

Then those people who had taken their stuff out of the shack and had put them into their cars and trucks whipped their guns out of their shoulder holsters and started shooting at us. Then Craig, his men, Trudy, and I started shooting back at them. Then we saw Rositer and Winston and the other people who were in on the impersonation plot run out of the back of the shack and into the wooded area. Quickly Craig, some of his men, Trudy, and I ran after them as the rest of Craig's men continued shooting at the other people who were in on the impersonation plot. Then we saw Rositer and Winston and the other people who were in on the impersonation plot get deeper and deeper into the wooded area. Then, Rositer, Winston, and the other people who were in on the impersonation plot stopped suddenly and looked.

Up ahead, more of Craig's men were inside the wooded area. And they had guns in their hands, too.

"Give it up!" Craig shouted out to Rositer and Winston and the other people who were in on the impersonation plot. "We've got you surrounded."

Then Rositer and Winston and the other people who in on the impersonation plot saw Craig and his men and Trudy and me and took cover behind some trees and shot at us. Then *we* got behind some trees and returned their fire. Craig shot one of the people who was in on the impersonation plot twice in the lung, and then he fell down to the ground and died. Two more of the people who were in on the impersonation plot shot and killed two of Craig's men, and *they* fell down to the ground and died.

Winston looked over the situation. He saw how many of us there were, and then he realized that if he could get behind us and get us in a cross fire, it might help. Then he ran out from behind the tree that he had been hiding behind and shot at us and got behind another tree. Then he checked his gun. Only two bullets left inside his automatic. Then he took the clip out of his automatic and put a fresh clip in his automatic, and then he ran out from behind the tree and shot at us, but then Trudy was able to shoot him and did. Three times in the chest.

"I got Winston," Trudy told Craig, the rest of his men, and me.

I saw Rositer and was able to aim at his gun hand. And did. And shot the gun out of his hand. Then he yelped in pain. And the gun went flying into the air.

Then Rositer saw where his gun hand landed. So did I. Then I took shot at his gun.

"Don't even think it, Rositer," I said to him.

"Don't worry, Eli," one of the other people who were in on the impersonation plot shouted out to Rositer. "We'll cover ya. Go get your gun." Then that man and the other people shot at me. But then Craig and *his* men and Trudy shot at them.

Then Rositer ran over to his gun and jumped onto the ground and grabbed his gun, and then he spun around, but before he could shoot me, I shot him. Three times in the chest.

The rest of the people who were in the impersonation plot and us kept shooting at each other. But we got more of them than they did of us.

"All right," one of the people who were in the impersonation plot who had survived the gunfight said. "We give up." Then he and the rest of the people who were in on the impersonation plot threw their guns out and they landed on the ground, and then all of the people who were in on the impersonation plot who had survived the gunfight came out with their hands up.

They walked back to the shack with us and Craig and his men read them their rights and handcuffed them and put them into their cars and drove them downtown to police headquarters so they could book them and jail them, and the rest of Craig's men who were still here at the shack and had had the gunfight with the rest of the people who were in on the impersonation plot handcuffed the rest of the people who were in on the impersonation plot and read them *their* rights and put them into *their* cars and drove them downtown to police headquarters so they could book them and jail them. And Trudy and I got into *our* cars and drove over to police headquarters.

Along the way, I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Susan and told her that we had just executed the last phase of our plan to find out what it was that Hazel wanted from Peter, and to keep her from getting her hands on it.

CHAPTER XIII

When we got here to police headquarters, Craig and his men booked and jailed all of the people who had been in on the impersonation plot, and then we learned from further investigation what I had suspected about the impersonation plot: Hazel had wanted to take over Consolidated Industries, and by doing that she had wanted Arlene to play the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, and go out with Peter after he comes back from his vacation in Europe and sucker him into coming onto her, and then Arlene, still playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, keeps him from coming onto her because she didn't like what he did. Then she calls the police and they come and take Peter away, and then Hazel takes over Consolidated Industries, and then she rewards the people who had helped her take over Consolidated Industries, and Arlene, still playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, quits Consolidated Industries saying that she felt terrible about what Peter had tried to do to her, and then she moves away from Bellingham, and then Arlene, no longer playing the role of Belinda Cranston, Casper Milquetoast turned swinger, goes back to work at Bellingham Security, as herself, Arlene Donnelly, operative for Bellingham Security, pretending not to know anything about what Hazel had tried to do, and she wasn't supposed to worry about her being the real Belinda Cranston's exact double. Because it's not unusual for someone to have a double. And the rest of the people who had been in on the impersonation plot were going to kill the real Belinda Cranston after they were going to be done with her, because she was a loose end, a liability, although they hadn't told her about Hazel's plot to take over Consolidated Industries. And none of the real Belinda Cranston's friends would know that she had been killed because they would think that she had quit Consolidated Industries and had moved away from Bellingham because of what Peter had tried to do to her.

In other words, she wouldn't be missed.

The next day, we also investigated Bellingham Security and discovered that the agency was really a front for criminal activities. Then Craig and his men closed down the agency, and we also discovered that the other employees of Bellingham Security had been in on these criminal activities as well as those other people who had been in on the impersonation plot had been in on these criminal activities, and then Craig and his men arrested them. And we also discovered that Hazel and Rositer and Winston and Arlene had been friends for a long time and that Hazel had been in on these criminal activities with everyone who had worked at Bellingham Security.

And the real Belinda Cranston went back to work at Consolidated Industries, and everyone here at Consolidated Industries was glad to see her, and her other friends, the ones who worked at other places and not at Consolidated Industries, were glad to see her, too.

And after I had finished helping Craig and his men finish the investigation of the Cranston occurrence, I went back to my office so I could finish writing my report on the Cranston occurrence so I could close the case, and to total up my bill for services rendered so I could give Susan the bill and then she pays me.

I was inside my office now. Sitting behind my desk and finished writing the report on the Cranston occurrence.

It was getting dark after I had finished writing the report on the Cranston occurrence and put the file on the Cranston occurrence into the filing cabinet and closed and locked

up the cabinet. The Cranston occurrence case was closed now. And now I could go home and rest up. I was going to need to. I was getting tired. And tomorrow I could come back here to my office and total up my bill for services rendered. So I turned the answering machine on, and then I walked over to the light on the wall and next to the front door of my office and turned the light on, and then I stepped out of the office and locked it up, and then I got into my car and went home so I could rest up.

The next day, I was back here in my office and totaling up my bill for services rendered.

After I had finished totaling up the bill, I took an envelope out of one of the drawers of my desk so I could write Susan's name and address on it and put the bill inside the envelope and mail the bill to Susan. I was about to write Susan's name and address on the envelope when the phone rang. I picked up the receiver and said hello.

It was Susan. She said she'd like to come over and pay me for services rendered. Then I told her when she could do that, and then we hung up.

I was looking forward to being paid for services rendered. Then I looked at my watch. Ten minutes to eleven.

I had a few minutes before Susan comes over here and pays me for services rendered.

A few minutes later, she showed up at my office to pay me for services rendered. She was wearing a light green waistlength coat and matching pants and a yellow turtleneck sweater and white tennis shoes, and her right hand was grasping the strap of her purse, which was resting on her right shoulder.

She and I were sitting down at my desk now. And I showed her bill for services rendered, and then she wrote out a check for me and gave it to me, and then I looked at the check. Then I smiled and spoke to her: "Thank you, Ms Ballis."

"Thank *you*, Mr. Hurley. For what you've done."

"You're welcome. And if you need something else secret or illegal looked into, let me know."

"I will,"

Then Susan and I stood up and shook hands.

"Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

"Bye, Ms Ballis,"

Then Susan left, and I sat back down behind my desk and looked at the check again. Then I smiled again. Then I got on the phone and called Trudy and told her that Susan had just paid me for services rendered, and then I asked Trudy how much I owed her for the work she had done for me, and then she told me. Then I told her I was going to mail a check to her. Then we hung up. Then I took an envelope out of one of the drawers of my desk and wrote Trudy's name and address on the envelope.

I was here at my bank now. I deposited most of the check that Susan had given me for services rendered, and put the rest of the money in my wallet, and then I wrote out a check to Trudy for the work she had done for me and put the check into the envelope that had her name and address on. Then I went over to the nearest post office and mailed the check to her.

Then I went home and went to bed so I rest up and recuperate before I go back to my office and wait for business to come my way. I was going to need to do that. And now I had the time to go home and rest up and recuperate before I go back to my office and wait for business to come my way. And until I go back to my office and wait for business to come my way, society is going to have to do without me.